

TO THE
Reader:

Courteous Reader ;

I*T is needless to Apologize for the seasonableness of emitting a Discourse of this nature, which can indeed never be out of season. Where Truth is not embraced, Goodness cannot be practised, for without knowledg the mind of man cannot be good: Where Truth doth not lead, felicity can never be obtained, for it is that which must lead us to God's Holy Hill. The putting out of this Light*

makes

A 3

To the READER.

makes a more dismal night than the taking away the Sun from the Firmament. They that sit in this darkness dwell in the Region of the shadow of death. And yet, how wofully contented are the greatest part of man-kind without it? how little solicitous to buy, how very forward to sell it? how much need therefore have they of being industriously laboured with to do themselves this kindness? As for my self, I have nothing else to plead for my adventuring to give light to these unpolished lines, but only that vulgar excuse of importunity, possibly too easily complied with; some charitable Friends hoping it might be of publick usefulness, whose judgment I (preferring it before mine own) complied with; and if it may but obtain the supposed efficacy, I shall have cause to rejoyce. How much of advantage God hath afforded to this place (where once, and not long since, the Father of lies had a throne, and no beams of Christian Religion were to be seen) to many large acquests of this nature (the Gospel having had its free course among us for so many

ny.

To the READER.

my Tears) is well known. What welcome hath been given to this mercy, and what improvement hath been made of this price; he that searcheth all hearts can tell. If our negligence should provoke God to shut up the Market, New-England's Glory is gone: If we sin away, and God take away the Truth, we are undone. The Lord hath more ways than one threatned us.

Here you have the only way to prevent so fatal a mischief: and the Father of mercies grant that this Solemn Advice may be successful to help (with the more strenuous endeavour of others) to awaken all his People, to know in this their day the things that belong unto their peace, that so the God of PEACE and TRUTH may still delight to dwell with us.

So Prayes,

Thine, &c.

S. W.

E18



Proverbs 23. 23.

*Buy the Truth, and Sell
it not.*

THe Proverbs of *Solomon* (not to mention their independency, which we are often told of; nor yet their singular excellency in couching of much matter in a few words,) are for the manner of their composure, of two sorts : 1. *Doctrinal*, being delivered in the form of Axioms or Sentences, for the Information of the Understanding in many weighty Truths. 2. *Hortatory*; presented in way of adhortation, or dehortation, to engage the Will and Affections, either to a

B

closure

2 *Buy the Truth, and sell it not.*

closure with, or an avoidance of such things as are of moment for them so to do. Of the latter sort of these, is this of our Text, and it is compounded of a Counsel, and a Caution. There is something advised to, *viz. Buy the Truth*; and something dehort-ed from, *i. e. Sell it not*. The words are *Metaphorical*; a form of Speech which the Holy Ghost makes frequent use of in the Holy Scriptures; therein dressing up of Heavenly Matter in Earthly Language, and thus accommodating of himself to our capacity: A Metaphor being nothing else but a contracted comparison, by which he represents the things of God under the resemblance of things here below; with which our constant converse among them gives us better acquaintance.

The allusion in our Text is borrowed from Traffick or Merchandize: a thing that is well known to, and more or less practised by all sorts of men. In it we may observe, 1. The Ware or Commodity which is here represented to us, which is *Truth*. The Spirit of God doth (as it were) look upon the worlds market, and observe how men are dealing for many sorts of Wares, and very busy in their Trading; and call out to them, and say, here is one *Commodity*

Commodity that you are very little mindful of, and yet I do commend it to you, as above all worth your purchasing, *viz. Truth.* The Hebrew Word signifies, *That which may be believed*, or to which Credit may be given. 2. The direction which is here given about it, and that is double; 1. *Positive*, *Buy it*, or *possess it*, as some read the word, it firstly and most properly signifies to get a thing into our possession; and because that is usually done by making a purchase of it, hence it is often used for *buying*: and this advice intimates to us, 1. That there is such a Commodity as Truth, else it were a great cheat to advise us to seek for it. 2. That we have it not of our own; that it doth not descend to us by inheritance, but if we would have it, we must purchase it. 3. That it is to be obtained by us, if we will but go to the cost, that there is a market in which Truth is set to sale, and offered to such as come there. 4. That it is not to be had for nothing, but men must be at some expense for it. 2. *Negative*: *Sell it not*; the word here used firstly signifieth, *to deliver a thing*, and hence to sell by a peculiar appropriation; because that which men have sold, they are wont to deliver up the possession of to him that hath bought it;

4 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

the meaning therefore of it is, that we must never *alienate*, or deliver up the Title and Possession of it out of our hands, thus intimating and plainly insinuating the transcendent or incomparable value of it. 3. We may consider the Buyer, or the persons who are invited to trade in this sort of Merchandize, though not expressed, yet included in the expression, *i. e.* every one of what rank or degree soever; Scripture Counsels, when directed *indefinitely*, are for the most part, intended *universally*; where the Spirit of God doth not set any limitations, neither should we: Hence,

Doct. *Truth is a Treasure which every one ought to purchase, whatever it costs him; and having once gotten it, never to forego it again.*

In pursuit of this Doctrine we may enquire, 1. What we are here mainly to understand by Truth, together with the evidence that there is such a thing? 2. What of duty is recommended to us under the notion of buying it? 3. Why every one ought to buy it? 4. What is the import of the phrase of selling? 5. Why it is not to be sold. A few words to each of these in order:

1. What we are here mainly to understand by Truth, &c.

A. The right knowledge to this is the Key

Key to the whole discourse; it will therefore be worth the while to make some enquiry after it. There are many notions about Truth, which have more of curiosity than common profitableness in them, which I shall therefore designedly avoid, and only touch at such as are more necessary. Concerning *Truth* in general, I shall only intimate thus much, *viz.* That as there are two principal *Faculties* in the Soul of Man, helping him in his rational closure with his objects; so there are two *Affections* in things, suiting and accommodating of them, for the closure of these faculties with them. These *Faculties* are the *Understanding and Will*; and those *Affections* of things are *Truth and Goodness*: for as Goodness is the attractive of the *Will*, so is Truth of the *Understanding*. Truth then is considerable in a treble notion; either as it is rooted in the thing, or as it is taken into the *Understanding*, or as it is communicated unto others. Truth in the thing is nothing else but the distinct nature of it, considered as it is knowable, and that either generically, specifically, or individually. It adds nothing really to the nature of the thing; but is only a relative affection, by which the
Under

6 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

Understanding may be helped to close with it, and discern it in its nature, causes, and effects. Truth in the Understanding, is properly the right conception which it hath entertained of things: when it forms in the mind a conception of the thing, just as it is in it self, that is Truth. Truth in communication is, when having a right notion of things, we do rightly express and impart them unto others; now according to these various notions which we have of Truth, it hath its various contraries: If we consider Truth as it is in the thing, then its contrary is falshood; if we look upon it as in the Understanding, its contrary is error: if we respect it as it is held forth in communication, then either a man speaks as he thinks, but erringly, and that is a mistake; or else he speaks wittingly and wilfully otherwise then the thing is, and with a purpose to deceive, and that is a lye; which is the thing most directly and immediately forbidden in the Ninth Commandment,

I might here add many distinctions about Truth, but I shall wholly wave them; only let us summarily observe, that *Truth is manifold*: So many Things as there be, so many Truths we may suppose there are at least; and every Truth is precious: There is

no Truth but what is of worth; but yet there are some that do excel: It is therefore worth the while to enquire, that we may find out the best, and we may be sure that is it which is here recommended to us.

Some Interpreters observe, that the word (*Truth*) used in the original Text, is put without the usual emphatick prefix, and hence suppose him to understand every kind of knowledge, both *Natural, Moral and Divine*: but this cannot be the meaning, for God hath not given to all men that advantage, nor yet is it necessary that every one be acquainted with all the inferior Truths of subordinate Arts and Sciences. Some again interpret it of *Gospel Ordinances*, in which the great saving Truths are dispensed; and by buying of them, they understand, a being at the charge of upholding and maintaining a Gospel Ministry: but this is also too narrow an interpretation for the Text; for there is many an one that doth so, and is yet for all this a thorough stranger to the Truth, though this may be included. Truth in the Scripture is used in divers senses, and it would be both tedious, and not necessary, to enumerate them all; I shall therefore pitch upon, this conclusion, *viz. The Doctrines of the true Religion*

Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.

ligion, as they are delivered by God himself, and contained in the Holy Scriptures, directing us the way to Eternal Life and Salvation, are properly that Truth which the Holy Ghost here exhibits, and adviseth to be bought.

Truth primarily and eminently is a Divine Property; hence God is called a God of Truth, *Psal.* 31. 5. and Jesus Christ as he is God, is the Truth, *John* 14. 6. Now God is not only True in his Essence, and hence called, *The only True God*, *John* 17. 3. but he is also True in his Word and Works: and herein he makes the creature to communicate in his Truth; but still, it is *Firstly* in him, and in them only *Derivatively*. The Eternal Idea which God had in his own Infinite Understanding, of all things that were to be in time, and all the several managements of them, is the *Exemplary Truth*. That which they have in themselves, is but a *Copy* of this: Truth in the Creature being its Conformity unto that Idea which God had of it in himself. Now in this Idea there were contained, not only the Rules of their Creation, according unto which they were to be made; but the Rules also of Providence, by which the Creatures were to be guided to their ends, which are therefore *Eternal Truths*: and among these, in
spe

Special there was that Rule by which man was to be led as a Rational Agent, or cause by Counsel, to an Everlasting Estate: This is that which we call *Divinity* or *Religion*, and is comprized in the *Plat-form* of *sound words*, shewing to man the way in which he may come to the favour of God, and a Kingdom of Glory. This Rule is contained in the Holy Scriptures, which are therefore called *the Scriptures of Truth*, *John* 17: 19. *Col.* 1. 5. *Dan.* 10. 21. the summe of what is contained in it, *Solomon* gives us in Old Testament Language, *Eccl.* 12. 13. *fear God, and keep his Commandments*, and *Paul* in New Testament words, *2 Tim.* 1. 13. *Faith and Love*.

That there is such a Truth as this I am speaking of, we must believe, or else we must utterly despair of the happiness of man at all, much more of fallen mans Salvation. If God had not found out a way for mans felicity, he had been left most miserable. If it were not a regulated way, (contained in sure Rules and Precepts) he could never have known it, but must always have lived in the dark about it; and if it were not drawn into infallible maxims, he could not possibly have gained any assurance of knowledge, when he was in
the

10 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

the right. *But God hath shewn unto man the way, Mich. 6. 8. and his word gives them sufficient direction, whence it is called, a Lamp, and a Light, Psal. 119. 105. and it is safe and secure to them that follow it, verse 165. In a word; if there were no Truth, the understanding of man must needs want an object; and if there were no Divine and Saving Truth, it would want an happifying object; but the Goodness and Grace of God hath plentifully provided for it, both the one and the other; hence that Prov. 2. 10, 11.*

2. What of Duty is recommended to us under the notion of *Buying*?

A. Buying in general refers to *Commutative Justice*; and is that wherein a man purchaseth to himself the right and possession of one thing, by the exchange of some other thing for it, with the consent of the former owner; which is accepted as a valuable price. This Metaphor is here used by the Holy Ghost, not by way of proportion, but meerly of similitude; for man hath nothing to give for it, that is equivalent to its worth, and is therefore said to *buy without money, and without price, Isa. 55. 1.* Only there is something to be done by the man in this transaction, which hath some little Analogy
with

with, or resemblance to such a thing among men; which what it is may be made to appear in several particulars.

1. Buying of any thing intimates that a man hath it not of his own; what a man hath already at home in his proper possession, he needs not go to the market to buy it; and thus it is with fallen man, in his Natural Estate: Truth doth not fall to him by inheritance, but he is born a meer stranger to it; see Psal. 58. 3. *They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* It is not to be denied, that there are some broken fragments of the ancient inscriptions of the Law, which was fairly engraven upon Adams heart, to be found in the consciences of his Posterity; and these are called *Truth*, Rom. 1. 18. *Who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness.* But they are but like to so many shattered pieces of a broken vessel, that cannot be put together again, and do serve only to witness unto the wofulness of his fall: But the Truth which contains in it the saving knowledge of God in Christ, is a thing which the world is a stranger to, and no natural man hath it, Rom. 3. 17. *The way of peace they have not known;* and he must go wholly out of himself

12 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

self for it, if ever he hopes to get it into his possession.

2. Buying argues the thing is to be sold, and that there is one that hath it to sell. A man may have a commodity, but if he resolves to keep, and hath purposed not to part with it, we can have no hopes of buying it: But Truth is to be had, if men were but willing to come up to the price of it; for though it is our duty to buy it, and then not to sell it again, so that one man cannot buy it of another, (the Wise Virgins can spare none of their Oyl to the foolish) yet God hath it for all such as want it, and are willing to hearken to his advice, and take his direction about it. Neither doth he only keep it in the chambers, to bring down to such as are making enquiry after it, but he lays it forth upon the Shop boards of the Ordinances, and offers it to all that come; nay, more than so, he (in pity to poor man) sends out a *Cryer* to proclaim it in markets and streets, that if there be any among them that hath any mind to Truth, if they will come to him for it, they shall have it on fair and rational terms; see how this is emphatically described in *Prov.* 8. begin. and cap. 9, 3, 4:

2. Buying

3. Buying presumes a desire of having the ware, raised by the apprehension of the suitableness, worth and excellency there is in it: though the natural man be a very fool in spiritual things, yet he hath a rational principle in him, which teacheth him not to be at cost for that which he hath not any esteem of, but reckons to be of no worth or use: The estimate which he sets upon any thing, is that which inwardly prompts him to barter for it; and just up to his esteem, so will his bidding be, rather than he will part with it: hence it is, that till *God sheds light* into mens minds, and convinceth them of the preciousness of Truth, they let it lye by, and will not so much as cheapen it; but when once they begin to have the right conceptions of it, and discern how advantageous a thing it is to him that hath it; now they will cry out earnestly after it, and then there is like to be a bargain made, *Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5. if thou cryest after knowledge, &c.*

4. A prudent buyer will see his wares, & try them before he will buy them. Men do not love to traffick in the dark, or take things upon trust, because they know that there is a great deal of falshood and deceit in the world, false wares are sold for true, bad things are
put

14 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

put off for good; they would therefore know what they pay for, and are exceeding loath to be cheated; and thus (to be sure) must he do that would buy the Truth, and not be imposed upon: for there are no such cheats used again in the whole world, as there are in matters of Religion. As God hath his Factors (the faithful Gospel Ministers) who use their utmost endeavour to set forth nothing to men, but the Saving Truths of the Gospel, those undeceiving verities of Jesus Christ, and such as will bear the trial, and stand before the exactest scrutiny: and hence they dare not deliver any thing at random, but with greatest solemnity weigh before hand, all that they make offer of unto men as Truth, *proving all things*: So Satan hath his broachers of false wares, his Merchants that have *the ballances of fraud* in their hands, who with a great deal of falsehood and coufinage, and *with many fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple*. They have an unknown deal of hellish art, and take great pains to set a specious gloss upon their commodities; hence Mat. 24. 24. *if it were possible they should deceive the very Elect*. So that they who would be sure to get the Truth, and not be put off with a lye in the
stead

stead of it, must not be over credulous, but exceeding wary ; and labour to be well skilled in the rules of distinction, and be able to make application of them with great curiosity : Such is *Pauls* advice, 1 *Thef.* 5.21. *prove all things* ; and it was the *Berians* commendation, that they tried all by *the Scriptures*, *Acts* 17. 11.

5. He that really intends to buy, will first cheapen ; every one hath such a principle, that he would buy at the best rates ; to have a thing good, and have it cheap, is most mens ambition ; a man may look upon a thing, and like it well enough for the kind, and be desirous to have it, but may be afterwards discouraged, when he hears the price : he may either not be willing, or not able to come up to it ; and truly let men look, talk, and commend, yet he never intends to make a real purchase of the true *Religion*, who doth not first *compute the cost* ; he that takes up a profession on a sudden, and never enquires what it must stand him in, never took it up sincerely ; nor doth he intend either to keep it, or to pay for it. Our Saviour Christ, when he had plainly told them what the true Religion must cost them, he urgeth upon them *to cast up the account*, and see whether

16 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

ther they could be content to be at the expence, intimating, that otherwise they might fall off from it with shame, and this by the parables of a *Builder and Warrior*, Luke 14. 28. &c.

6. He that buys a thing, comes to a price, and indents for it ; in buying a bargain is driven home : It is not enough to cheapen ; there are a great many that do so, and after that, blow upon the commodity, turn their backs, and go away ; but the man who is resolved to have it, though at first he may for a while stickle at it, yet at last he comes to an agreement, accepts the terms, consents to the proposal, both in quantity and *specie*. There are many that lend an outward ear to the tenders of the Gospel, and wait till they hear what terms Christ propounds, but when they understand what they are, they cry out *this is an hard saying*, with them *John* 6. 60. and so they soon go away, vers. 66. but those that are for Christ and Truth, stand by it, and say with *Peter*, verse 68. *Whether shall we go, thou only hast the words of Eternal Life.*

7. Buying is the parting with something in exchange for that which we buy : that
which

which a man buys, he is at cost for; so, though the Truth be not the proper recompence of any expense that we can bear, (being infinitely more worth than all that we can lay down) but is the meer free gift of God; yet there is something that we must let go for it. Now in humane contracts, a man either pays money or labour, or exchangeth one commodity for another; so here all these are requisite in the purchasing of the Truth. It requires labour, and it is an hard work to procure the Heavenly Wisdom, Prov. 2. 4. *If thou diggest for her as for Silver, &c.* yea, and he must pay money too for it, if he will have it, that which a man accounts his best, and is most loth to let go; he must *sell all that he hath*, Mat. 13. 44. yea, he is sometimes called to part with all his Relations, all his Comforts of this life, his liberty, yea, and Life it self for the Truth: and if this be the price that God sets it at, he must not murmur at it, nor withdraw from his bargain, but venture upon it; as Luke 14. 26.

8. Buying gives interest and propriety in the thing which is bought; what a man hath bought, that he owns, enjoys and posses-

18 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

possesseth. So the word (*Buy*) in our Text plainly intimates. Such is the buying of the Truth: Now a man then possesseth the Truth, when he can truly call it his own; and that is, when he is come to the saving knowledge of it; Truth is not to be laid up in Chests, and Coffers, as the worlds riches may; but it is the Understanding of man, which is the only subject of Truth: we have it, when we know it; and it is here to be observed, that knowledge is of two sorts; either *literal*, or *saving*; the former of these alone, is not worthy the name of *Buying*; it doth not really impropriate or take possession of the Truth; it is only the latter that doth so; and hence is only honoured by Christ with the name of knowledge; John 17. 3. *This is Life Eternal, to know thee, &c.* and the Truth is thus purchased by a man, when the Soul, discerning of a transcendent beauty in it, and perswaded of the incomparable worth of it, prefers it before all other things whatsoever, and parting with every thing else, in heart and affection, closeth in with it, and Christ in it, as his only Soul satisfying portion: he that doth so, buys: every one else, who comes short of this, let him profess never so fairly, he hath but trifled.

3. *Why every one ought to buy the Truth?*

A. There are three things, which if they be put together, will sufficiently clear up the Reason of this duty, and they are.

1. The necessity which all men stand in of it; the well being of every man hath a real dependance upon his having of it, without a spiritual and saving knowledge of the great Truths of the Gospel, there is no Salvation to be expected by any of the children of men, Hos. 4. 6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*, without Truth in the Understanding, there can be no moral goodness in the will; without the knowing of God and Christ, there can be no believing on him; till the eyes of the mind be enlightened; the enmity of the heart will still remain in it, and there can be nothing but estrangedness from God: *they*, and none but *they that know him*, will put their trust in him, Psal. 9: 10. where Divine Truth is not exhibited, there Perdition reigns and rageth, Prov. 29: 18. *Where there is no Vision, the people perish*. If a man could gather together all the wealths and delights of this lower world, and enjoy them in the fullest mea-

20 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not?*

sure of content that he is capable of, if yet he be without the Truth, he is for all this a poor and a miserable man. He cannot live well without it; for his whole life can be nothing else but one perpetual wandering out of the paths of peace, and stragling in the way that leads to destruction. Truth is the only *directrix* of a mans life, so as to make it regular, and guide it safely, hence that, Psal. 86. 11. *Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy Truth*; without this no man can dye well: there is nothing else that will stick by a man in the hour of distress, to afford him any of the least comfort then, but this will; *Hezekiah* had happy experience of it, Isa. 38. 3. *I have walked before thee in truth*. The dying man can see nothing but darkness before him, except Truth enlighten him; this is that which alone can discover to him the life after death, and the fullness of Joyes that is at Gods right-hand, when all his earthly comforts are bidding him a final adieu. This only will stand a man in stead for eternity; the man that hath lived a long while, and driven a great trade in this world, and seemed to gain in it, if among all those many things which he hath here bin bartering for, he hath neglected to deal for, and so hath

not.

Buy the Trtuh, and Sell it not. 21

not made sure of this, that man hath laid in nothing for afterwards, hath no assurance of any thing that will accompany him beyond the grave, and meet him in the next life.

2. That they who do intend to have it must buy it; no man is born into the world posselt of it: no godly man leaves it as an unfailing inheritance to his children; nor do any of the Sons of men come by it without pains and cost: it is a pearl of a vast price, and all that a man hath must go for the purchase; all our lusts, all our lyes, all our false opinions, and foolish confidences must be relinquished; it is an hid treasure, and if we would come at it, and find it out, we must dig for it; and it lies deep, and therefore great pains must be taken before we can obtain it; the promise of it is *Hypothetical*, Hos. 6. 3. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know*; and Dan. 12. 4. *They shall run too and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*. Though all grace be the free gift of God, and a fruit of his meer bounty, and can no way come within the reach of our merit; yet it is the pleasure of God to command men to buy it, if they will have it; which is to let us understand,

C 3

22 *Buy the Truth, and sell it not.*

stand, that it is not the negligent, but the diligent and self-denying person that is in the way to the obtaining of it: hence buying is recommended, in *Isa. 55. 1. Rev. 22. 17.* and *Prov. 4. 4. Get Wisdom*, it is the same word with this which is read, *buy*, in our Text: and *Paul* in a parallel expression, tells us that *he suffered the loss of all for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*, *Phil. 3. 8.* he sold every thing; he parted with his esteem of, and renounced his right to all that he had sometimes placed any value upon for this knowledge.

3. That God makes an offer of the Truth to all that live under the Gospel; or come within the sound of it: and there are none of these but have a price in their hand to purchase it, if they have but an heart to it. As there are none in the world that are so rich and wealthy, as to be able to bring to God, and lay down at his feet the full value of it, its worth being more than Crowns and Kingdoms; and we have an illustrious and yet not in the least hyperbolical setting it forth, and challenge made to find any thing fit to be given in exchange, *Jeb. 28. 15. to 19*) so there are none so poor and despicable, but they have

have wherewithal to obtain it upon evangelical terms, if they do but embrace them, *Mat. 11. 5. The poor have the Gospel preached to them.* It is a mans all that God requires, be it more or less; he demands all of every man, and but all of any man: and there is no person but hath some high conceits of his own wisdom and excellency, some carnal confidences and self-boasting, some vain opinions, and foolish lusts, which they place a great deal of esteem in, and set very much by; something or other, which though it be of no worth at all in it self, but is meer dirt and dung; is yet in their own opinion of great worth, to part with all for the sake of Christ and Truth. It is true, men hold these things too fast, and are so glewed in heart and affection to them, that they cannot part with them of themselves, except God affords them grace to do it, and powerfully divide them from them, *Hes. 4. 17. Ephraim is joined to Idols:* but yet every one is capable of this grace, and therefore ought not to reject the offers of it which are made unto him, as a thing beyond his capacity and hope; but to wait upon the Lord to enable him of his mercy, to drive this happy bargain, to buy and get possession of the Truth.

24 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

4: *What is the import of the phrase of Selling?*

A. Buying and Selling are relates, and so they are contraries; the word (we have observed) firstly signifies the *delivering of a thing up*. Selling, according to the common use of the word, is properly the *parting with a mans propriety in a thing, for some other thing which is given him in exchange for it*: A man is both a buyer and seller at the same time, in divers respects: that which he purchaseth a right to, that he buys, and that which he parts with his right in for it, that he sells; but a little more particularly.

1. Selling implies an intrest in a thing; a man must have a thing before he can sell it: he must be some way or other posselt of it. Now men may two ways be said to be posselt of the Truth; either,

1. When they have in an open profession owned and acknowledged the Truth of the Gospel; when they have attained unto a literal understanding of, and give an historical assent and credit to the Doctrines of life

laid down in the Word of God, and do declare for them openly. Or,

2. Which is the best and surest title; when they have *received the Truth in Love*, and heartily embraced it by a saving faith; when they receive it, *as it is in Jesus*; when they are really built upon it: for then the Truth is indeed theirs by such a sure claim, as can never be justly questioned; they have bought it, and it is their own; God himself hath made it over to them, and sealed up the Sale.

2. Selling imports our letting go or parting with our propriety altogether in the thing; what a man hath sold, he can no longer lay any claim to, or challenge any right in it; he puts himself wholly out of the possession of it, and alienates it to another: and hence from that time forward, he disowns, disclaims, looks not after it, concerns not himself about it: thus a man hath then sold the Truth, when he hath relinquished the Profession of it, which sometimes he had made: when a man once comes to disown the Truth, as to an outward Profession, and either will not stand by it, or openly renounceth it, when he either will not
own

26 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

own it, or is bold to deny it, though once he challenged an interest in it, this man hath sold it.

3. Selling imports a willingness to part with a thing. There are somethings which may be taken away from men by an hand of violence, and against their wills; they that are too strong for them, may wrest them out of their hands forcibly, and this cannot be called selling; for that is ever done by consent, it being always acted in a contract which is made between two parties, to the making up and determining of which the will must of necessity yeild. There may indeed be a lothness in a person to part with such a thing, and by reason of this averfeness, he may give a great many denials to him that is urgent upon him to move him to sell it, but all this while there is a demurr, there is no bargain made till it comes to this, for that always waits for consent; he may indeed come to this with reluctancy, yet he is prevailed upon to yeild; and truly the Truth is such a commodity, as no man that hath it, can be robbed of it, nor can he lose it, except he be willing to it; it must be a voluntary act of his own: Men may lose their

their liberties, they may lose their estates, their credit or reputation among men, their visible enjoyment of the Gospel and Ordinances thereof, all these may be taken away from them whether they will or no: but they cannot lose the Truth, except they deliver it up; they may indeed be bewitched with enticements, so were the *Galatians*; *Gal. 3. 1.* but it is their own folly that they are so, as he there gives them to understand. *O Foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the Truth?*

4. Selling also intends that men receive something in exchange for that which they part withal, and that they let it go upon that consideration; men always take something for that which they sell, either in hand, or in a promise, or else it is not selling; and the Spirit of God in this prohibition of his presumes that there will be those who will offer to buy the Truth off mens hands, and that will urge them with temptation to part with it, yea, and will make them seemingly large and tempting offers to move them to consent and drive up a bargain: not that they have any desire of having it themselves, or of making any profit to themselves by buying it off their hands; but meerly because they envy others

28 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

others the possession of it; and there are two things which frequently become Temptations to men to let go the Truth for them, viz.

1. Mens outward peace and quietness. There are times wherein *Persecutions* arise for the Truth, and if men will own it, and stand by and maintain their title to it, it will cost them a great deal of molestation: The Disciples of Christ must look to be hated of *all men for Christ and Truths sake*; and oftentimes there are pretendedly fair offers made unto them; that if they will baulk the Truth but a little, and part with but a few grains of this pearl, they shall have peace and liberty in exchange for it; whereas, if they will not give their consent, they shall suffer all manner of opposition, and be exposed to violence and rage; and when the case is such, the heart of man, which naturally loves ease and immunity from trouble, is too ready to be ensnared, and give a most unhappy consent to such a proposal as this, and rashly to buy their peace with the sale of the Truth.

2. The gratification of some fleshly lust; the truth is an enemy to all these; and many

My times it is so, that men cannot hold the Truth in a conscientious profession of it, but this will prevent the aims, and curb in the reachings of carnal concupiscence : sometimes Covetousness craves after the world, and its desires are so large and boundless, that they cannot be kept pace withal, except a man remit some part of the Truth which concerns honesty, and some rules of piety too, or Religious Duties; and now if he will get the world, he must sell these Truths, so did *Demas*, 2 Tim. 4. 10. sometimes a mans ambition reacheth after preferment, and so much of honour and command, as may be procured in a way of truth, will not content him : if he will rise in the worlds favour, and climb to its dignities, he must let go some of the Truths of his profession, or dissemble them, and not openly own them, nay, possibly (as the times may be) he must renounce, and take upon him the contrary profession : and the weak mind of man is often wofully exposed by such Temptations, as are so suited to his carnal inclinations.

From the Premises we may gather this Conclusion, *viz.* That when we are bidden not to sell the Truth, *we are thereby enjoined*
to

30 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

to maintain the belief, and answerable profession of it, and by no means to be prevailed upon to renounce, or so much as dissemble it: neither to be tempted with the menaces on the one hand, nor wound in with the flatteries of the world on the other, to part with the Truth in exchange either for life, or liberty or favour, or grandure, or any Flesh pleasing error whatsoever.

5. Why it is not to be sold.

A. There need no other reason be rendered of it, but this; Because, for a man that hath bought the Truth, to sell it again; crosseth all the rules and ends of prudent Merchandize, and this may be exemplified in two or three particulars.

1. No Understanding Man will part with that which he cannot subsist without, and if he put it out of his hands, cannot get it again; for by so doing he at once undoes himself: such a thing is Truth; it is a mans life, if he have it not, he is an undone man: without Truth no man can be saved; he who sells the Truth, *bates his own soul*; he is guilty of destroying himself with his own hands, it is utterly impossible that he should
barter

Buy the Truth; and Sell it not. 31

barter for any thing in exchange for it, that can supply the necessary use of it to him; for the world hath it not to offer him: in the very same moment wherein a man parts with the Truth, he parts with God, and Christ, and Heaven, and all grounded hope of happiness: and if men will be so foolish as to sell the Truth, God is wont to be so severe in bearing witness against them, *as to give them up to believe a lye, to their own damnation*; as that Awful Scripture denounceth, *2 Thes. 2. 9, 10.* and what will become of such an unhappy wretch, when he hath sold the Truth that could have saved him, and purchased a lye in the room of it, that will damn him?

2. The next end of buying and selling is to get gain; and no man would willingly if he could avoid it, sell any thing to his loss, much less to his irreparable loss. A man may possibly be a loser by trading, and it may be unavoidable, but it is no mans proposed end to be, but the contrary; but we cannot sell the Truth upon any account, but our loss by his sale will be incomputable: let the offer which is made for it look never so big, and that a man gets by his parting with the Truth be in vulgar esteem of never so great worth, yet this man that hath thus sold, hath sold to
the

32 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

the loss; he puts off an Oriental Jewel for a pebble stone, that gives the Truth for it: Suppose a man should purchase the Lease of ten or twenty years in this world of quiet, and freedom from molestation by forsaking of it, when possibly he must have been cut off from life it self, if he would have kept the Truth: nay, suppose that he should have had the whole world as a compensation for it, yet before a man strikes up, it is good for him seriously to ponder and chew upon that of our Saviour, Mat. 16.26. *What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own Soul?* this is certain, that one Truth hath ten thousand times more worth in it, than ten thousand worlds; what wise man then would sell it?

3. A man will deny himself in parting with something to do a friend a kindness, but both to do wrong to himself, & really to gratify or advantage no other, is nothing less then madness: and so doth that man that sells the Truth. They are not friends, but the worst of enemies (because they are so to our Souls) who seek to get it from us; and that also to no benefit of theirs at all, but only to satisfy their own malignity, and to do a spite unto us. He that sells the Truth,
grieves

grieves all that he had any reason to please, God and his Holy Spirit are grieved, and Gods people are thereby scandalized: and whilst he does no true good to any in the world, he quite undoeth himself; and this is always the undoubted issue of such a bargain, Prov. 8. 36. *He that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own Soul.*

USE I. *For Reprehension; it serves to convince the folly and madness of the greatest part of men that live under the light of the Gospel, and there are multitudes that stand guilty in both the points here commended to us.*

I. It is matter, as of lamentation, so of just rebuke, that the Truth hath so few Customers that are in good earnest to buy it: and there are two considerations, which highly aggravate the blame of those men that have had their lot cast in this corner of the world, viz.

I. That Truth hath been brought to their doors, and offered to, yea, urged upon them daily; and yet they do neglect it: there hath been no need to send to the farthest Indies, to fetch it thence, and yet they will venture so far to procure that which is but

34 *Buy the Truth, and sell it not.*

dirt and trash in comparison of it: they have not been necessitated to go from Town to Town, and *wander from Sea to Sea, for the Word of God*, but it hath been brought home unto them, and God hath had his **C**riers in every place, who have called out unto men from Sabbath to Sabbath, and upon divers other market-days have exposed the Truth to their view; have opened to them the great mysteries of the Gospel, and used many earnest entreaties with men that they should give entertainment thereunto; and yet for all this, how have they slighted and disregarded?

2. That it hath been offered to them upon fair and easy terms; Truth was hardly ever a better penniworth since the world stood, than it hath been to us; and whether ever it will be so cheap again in our days, as it hath been now for these so many years, the Lord knows: Truth indeed can never be an hard bargain; suppose it be attended with never so many disadvantageous circumstances, it is still good, and worth our buying, though we must have shame, reproach, and bloody Persecution as appendices to it: Truth and a **C**ross, Truth and a faggot are not to be rejected by him who will approve himself wise: but

But yet such appurtenances of it are wont to be a discouragement to flesh and blood, and reluctant nature is wont to misgive at the apprehension of it: but we have had this precious pearl set in gold: Truth under all manner of advantages hath been offered unto us; *peace, plenty, credit, preferment*; and that notwithstanding all this, it hath still bin so slighted among us, and there have been so few that have bought it, is a plain discovery of our woful folly, and will stand against all such as have not so done to their greater condemnation: and that this use is no slanderous accusation, but a just and necessary reprehension, and that I may withal point at such as do most of all deserve to come under the conviction of it, let it be considered.

1. How many there are (especially in this place) that seldom (if ever) frequent truths market; *i. e.* the Publick Ordinances? Not to make mention of, or bring into this Catalogue, these who pretend themselves born possessed of Truth enough to serve their turn, and so greatly enriched with a treasure of a *Light within*, that they make it one principal article of their Religion, never to come there where Truth is to be bought; it is said by some who have had great advantage to

36 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

make such an observation, that no Sabbath-day passeth, wherein there are not many hundreds in this very place, who have nothing of necessary hindrance, and yet do not repair to any one place of Publick Worship: and of a great many more, it is too notorious to be called into question, that if they can get forth to Gods House one part of the Sabbath, they have full enough of the Publick Worship, and think they have done some great matter: and it is certain, that such as these are no buyers; they are onely such as *watch daily at Wisdoms gates, and wait at the posts of her Doors,* Prov. 8. 34.

2. The unsuitable behaviour of many under them, who do come to the Ordinances, proves them not to be in earnest: not to say, but that there may be reason sufficient to think that there are many who outwardly profess, and make shews of much reverence and attention, who may yet be such as the Lord complains of to the Prophet, Ezekiel 33. 31. *Come as the people cometh, &c. and with their mouth, they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their Covetousness.* What shall we judg of those who come to the house of God to sleep out the time wherein they should

should be hearing the Oracles of God, or stand gazing up and down to observe persons and garbs, or are whispering and laughing together, when they should be yeilding attendance to the things that are spoken? All of which are too notoriously common and observable, to be charged as fancies and surmises. Or,

3. The woful deficiency there is in many, in regard of the fruits of profitable attending upon Gospel Ordinances: if men do really buy the Truth, it will enrich them, and it will not be hid; but what shall we say, to,

1. The gross ignorance of such great numbers, even in the main and principal points of Religion? those very staple truths of it; the most main and necessary things of all? that of the Apostle is too true of them Heb. 5. 12. *When for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the Oracles of God,* and if in a place where there hath so much of light shone, and the Truth hath been so easy to come by, men have all this while gotten so little of it into their hands, what shall we then think they have in their

38 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

hearts? if they had any heart to it, it could not possibly be so.

2. The vain and foolish conversation of multitudes : We may say of the Truth, when men have indeed bought it, as Solomon speaks of Wisdom, which is the same thing, Prov. 2. 10, 11, 12. *When Wisdom entreteth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy Soul, discretion shall preserve thee, &c.* and therefore wickedness is in Scripture called folly, and ungodly men fools; so that when we see sin daily abounding among us, and men living without any care or regard to their lives and ways, walking in the paths of death, and going in the road-way to destruction, it is a clear witness against them, that they have rejected the Truth; and our Saviour tells us, *This is the Gospel Condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men chuse darkness rather than light, because their works are evil,* John 3. 19:

3. The little care there is to instruct and bring up children in the knowledg of the Truth; if men had indeed bought the truth, they could not but be engaged in heart and affection to it, and if so, they would desire that others might get it too; especially their children,

children, for whose wealth and prosperity nature it self teacheth them to be solicitous, when therefore they can altogether neglect them, and neither take any pains to instruct them themselves, nor send them carefully to those places where they may be instructed, they grossly discover themselves, to be at least strangers to the saving knowledge of the Truth; else they could never rest content till they had brought theirs to the market, and used their best endeavour that they might purchase it too; how often is the wise man in the Proverbs calling upon his Son to seek after Wisdom?

Now for the greater conviction, give me leave to fasten this nail of reproof with these three blows: Consider,

1. By this neglect you put an high affront upon the God of Truth. God accounts that he hath made you the greatest and most liberal offers that can be, when he hath set before you his Gospel, and published the great Truths of Salvation in your hearing, together with the inviting you to come and get them for your own; for you therefore after all this to neglect them, and have no regard to them, is a carriage most contemptuous

40 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

tuous, and argues that you look upon them as not worth the seeking after : and God looks upon himself to be set at naught by these carriages, and hence you must needs thus irritate his anger, and engage him against you, and how woful a folly is that?

2. If you neglect to buy the Truth now, shortly it will not be to be bought; not only will the price rise, as there is abundant likelihood that it will, if Truths enemies may obtain their will; and how far God may permit it thus to be, to make those who have thus slighted it, to see and feel their own foolishness, I cannot tell : but the market will in a little time be quite over with you ; see Eccl. 9. 10. *There is no wisdom in the grave whether thou goest ;* you may live to see the time when that complaint will again be verified, Psal. 74. 9. *We see not our signs, there is no more any Prophet.* However, it is certain, that there are no offers made of it to those that are gone down into silence ; hell is not privileged with having the proclamations of the Gospel made in it, and the spiritual teachings of the Truth there applied ; when the present life ends, there will thenceforth be no advantage to buy, for God will not then sell the Truth to any ; and least you should de-
spise

spise this motive, and think it no such infelicity to lose the opportunity of purchasing it: Consider,

3. There will a time certainly come, wherein you will repent of this great neglect; although you please your selves with lies for the present, yet they will not do always: you will ere long be unavoidably convinced, that in all your other dealings in the world, you have bin laying out your money for that which is not bread. When a man comes to leave this world, and must then leave all his worldly gettings behind him, and none of all his gain must descend with him into the grave, then will he wish, (and it may be too late) Oh that I had not fool'd away my precious advantages! that I had not spent all my time about that *which cannot profit!* had I but laboured for the Truth as much as I have done for these perishing things, it would not thus have deserted me, I should not have gone thus naked into an amazing eternity. Scorn these warnings now as much as you please, yet this I dare to pawn my credit, yea and life upon, that all those who despise the saving Truths of Jesus Christ, will sooner or later be powerfully convinced of their excellency, and their own desperate

42 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

desperate madness, in contemning of them, and be enforced whether they will or no, with heart-breaking ejulations to cry out of their own unhappy foolishness, so carelessly to miss of heavens market, and triflingly to lose the once fair opportunity of buying the Truth, when there *was a price in their hands*, and there wanted nothing but *an heart to it* ; but *Oh that you were now wise, that you understood this, and would consider the latter end.*

2. They also do as deeply deserve this reproof, that are as forward to sell the Truth as the other were backward to buy it. Truth doth not only lye upon Gods hands (as a neglected drug, and needless commodity) for want of customers, but many that have bought it are ready to turn it upon his hands again, beginning to repent of their bargain. Nor doth this reproof only reach unto such as have bought it no more than in a visible profession, and by a literal knowledge, but even those that have savingly bought too : for although there is no truly believing Soul that shall so fall from grace, as finally to relinquish the great things of Life and Salvation, yet they may, and often do unhappily pawn this or that parcel of Truth, and
sometimes

sometimes also come too near the making of this undoing bargain; though the Holy Spirit of God doth in great faithfulness give them such a seasonable whisper, and so effectual as shall make them to revoke it again before it be thoroughly driven; and it is to be observed, that when the Gospel Truth hath been embraced but in a profession, it is very rare that any such do sell it again by whole sale; there are too deep impressions of it made upon the Consciences of men, to suffer them to part with it all at once: but how many such are there that retail it out in parcells, till they have very little left behind? and for a more particular discovery of those that are found guilty upon this account: Let us but observe,

I. How many there are that have been bartering of the Truth for Error? such as have sometimes been Orthodox in their profession, how are they by degrees drawn to believe Lies instead of the Truth, and have set themselves with eager violence to oppose those things which sometimes they have resolutely maintained? they have suffered themselves to be bewitched with the enticements of error, and to drink of its poysoned cup: they have hearkened to a few fair
speeches,

44 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

speeches, and cunningly devised fables, till they have been perswaded to let go some precious Truth or other in their room; yea, and been so foolish as not only to rest well contented with, but to make their foolish brags and boasts of the happy exchange they have made; as tho' a gilded error were of more value than a plain and solid Truth: how hath that of the Apostle been too sadly verified? Rom. 16. 18. By good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple; and it is to be taken notice of, as a thing most frequent, that when men once begin thus to break bulk, it is very improbable that they will stop till they have put off their whole lading.

2. How much baulking there is of the truth to gratifie mens own lusts, and the lusts of other men. All Divine Truths are practical, and men then properly hold them, when they walk in conformity to them, so that when men once begin *in works to deny the Profession which they have in word held forth*, they do really make sale of the Truth, and this is usually done to give content to some lust or other: mens exorbitant courses are therefore in Scripture called *Lies*, because they are a practical renouncing of the Truth;

Truth; & that man that lives contrary unto it, doth as openly deny it, as he who sets himself to confute it by arguments: and where ever a man doth any thing which is contrary to the light of the Word of God, and the Dictates of his own Conscience, he then foregoes the Truth; and if he doth not sell it out-right, he lays it to pawn; and how many such Mortgages may we see made in the world, from one time to another? and it is plain, that there are many who run so deep upon the account, that it is justly to be doubted, whether ever they intend to take them up again. The covetous man, who to get gain, neglects the rules of honesty; the voluptuous man who to please the cravings of his fleshly lusts, goes beyond the set bounds of sobriety; the ambitious man, who to scrue himself into preferment in the world, forgets the precepts of sincerity; when the fearful man to avoid reproach and scoffs, and to preserve his Estate or Liberty, either dissembles or suppresseth the Truth, these men are in all these things guilty of transgressing this command, and are to be looked upon as barterers of the Truth. In a word, every degree of Apostacy; all growing weariness of the Gospel Ordinances, all careless or slighty attendance upon the means of grace,

or

46 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

or neglect of performing the duties enjoined men in the Word of God, come under this reproof : and if men once come to think the Truth a burdensome or a dangerous thing to them, they are not very far from making a sale of it ; when it is as Mal. 1. 13. *What a weariness is it ?* and in pursuit of this reproof, I might reinforce the arguments used with the former, but to pass them over, let me further urge two things.

1. Consider what a vile disparagement you do hereby cast upon the Truth : He that doth not prefer it above all things, doth certainly greatly disparage it , he that can but entertain a thought in his heart of letting it go upon any account, must needs be supposed to undervalue it : yea, such a thought as that consented unto , is a formal sale of it, for in that thought he hath indeed let it go : nay , he that makes a deliberate question about it, doth in so doing make a doubt whether there be not something better than the Truth, yea, and that very thing, how vile and base soever it be, for which he thinks of selling it, begins by his so thinking, to challenge in his understanding a pre-

preference to the Truth: no man can so much as debate within himself about the selling of it, until he hath entertained in his heart, vile and unworthy conceptions of it; and how high a provocation this must needs be to the God of Truth we may well suppose, when we remember that his own name and glory is concerned in it, for the vindication whereof he stands everlastingly engaged, and if men will so far trample upon his honour, as to debase his Truth unto an unworthy sale, they shall find him to be a *jealous God*, and one that will not *so part with his Glory*.

2. Consider you will thus render yourselves not only miserable, but also unpitied. You will not only be undone, but come under the deserved charge of being your own undoers: who will shew compassion to that man, that hath a Jewel of unconceivable value, enough to enrich him for ever, and yet goes and barter it away for a *trifle*, a worthless toy, and a thing that will never do him a real kindness? so the Lord chargeth them for doing, Jer. 2: 11. *My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.* But then, for a man to put it away for misery, and that upon choice, is the most aggravated

48 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

gravated madnels: so doth every one that sells the Truth, let him do it upon the most seemingly rational considerations that can be imagined for a man to forgo that which alone can guide, direct, and lead him up to the enjoyment of God, and Christ, and glory, for nothing better or more valuable, than that which will perish in a little time, and before he can well settle himself upon it, must forsake him for ever, is such a piece of foolery as cannot be parallel'd: and thus the Lord himself paraphraseth upon the Apostacy of the Jews, Jer. 2. 13. *My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of Living Waters, and hewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no Water, and what could they do more, to undo themselves utterly?*

USE II. For Information; and there is this only inference which I shall draw from the Doctrine, viz. we may hence learn how greatly they are mistaken, who take upon them to censure the people of God for being at too much pains to get, and being so fixedly resolved not to part with the Truth. These are the two main articles which ungodly men have to urge, and for which they pass so severe a verdict against them, and upon the account whereof they stigmatize them

will

Buy the Truth, and Sell it not. 49

With many names of reproach : but the Doctrine before us will stand up for their justification, and serve to vindicate their reputation from the merit of any opprobry ; let us bring them both to this touch stone.

I. The world judge it to be high imprudence in them, that they are at so much cost and charge for the purchasing of the Truth. There are some who voluntarily leave all outward advantages, which they might otherwise have enjoyed, that so they may dwell at Truth's Market, and possess the free liberty of Gods House and Ordinances, and sit under the plain Dispensations of the Word ; they do also liberally expend for the upholding of the means of grace among them, accounting it a rich mercy to have the opportunity so to do ; they take up a considerable part of their time every day in conversing with God and His Word ; they frequent on all occasions the publick places where Truth is opened and exhibited ; and give all diligence to get more intimate acquaintance with it ; and because they thus do, they are accounted a company of half witted people, silly Souls, that do not know what is for their own good : what a deal of time do they unprofitably waste away for
E they

50 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

they know not what? how many shillings, nay pounds, might they have gained in the time, whilst they were at such a Sermon, attending upon such an Ordinance? and all this to acquaint themselves with a few empty notions which they call Truth, that when they have gotten them, will neither fill the belly, nor cloath the back: But stay a little, and don't run away with all the cry, as if you were the only wise and prudent men in the world, and wisdom or folly must needs take their measures from your vote: know it then, that these persons have not only heavens approbation for wisdom, but by your own rules also, if you will fairly and impartially apply them, you shall be enforced to confels them to be men of the greatest discretion: For,

1. They drive the *richest trade*: they are poor and paltry things that other men are dealing in, compared with what these men deal for: hear the wisemans judgment in this case, Prov. 3. 14. *The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof, then fine gold, and chap. 8. 19. my fruit is, better than gold, yea than fine gold, and my revenue than choice silver.* One Saving Truth really purchased, makes the man more
wealthy

than if he had engroft the treasure of both the *Indies*; he hath gotten a Pearl which hath more of intrinsecal worth in it than the whole world besides; that which will stand him more in stead, and do him a far greater kindness, than if he had a whole house full of gold: these be the men who are in the right way to inherit substance, whereas all other men are but in the pursuit after meer shadows. There are some men here that can make their brags how they have gotten some hundreds in a bargain, that hath not been many hours in driving; but he that receives one beam of Divine Truth irradiating his Soul in an Ordinance, hath gained more than many Millions in that hour; and let him who hath been so vain as to spend the time of an Ordinance in his Shop or Ware-house with the best advantage that can be thought of, compare with him who hath been the same time in the House of God, and well improved his time there, and he shall find upon a true account, that this man hath made incomparably the best bargain, for the one hath been trading for the things of time, while the other hath been dealing for those of eternity.

2. They drive the *surest* trade, as their
E 2 gain

52 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

gain is by much the greatest, so it is the most certain, the Worlds Merchants run through great hazards, and deal upon the highest uncertainties ; all their expectations hang upon meer peradventures, and hence by a most proper name, they call that part of their estate which they send abroad in way of trading, their *venture*, for it must first run through unknown casualties, if ever it make a good return : it may be *shipped in good order and well conditioned*, but one dash upon a Rock, may split all his hope at once, and bury his whole treasure in a grave of Waters ; one Leak breaks violently in and spoils it, a Pyrate meets it accidentally in his way, and makes a prize of it ; or if it scapes all these dangers, and reach its Port, in safety, a bad market loseth him all his gains at last ; and therefore to scape some of these inconveniences, men deal with Ensurers, and so hope to save part ; but sometimes they break too : But this man that is trading for the Truth in good earnest, hath heavens ensurance, and the security of a never failing Promise, from an able and faithful God, for his success and continued gain, Hosea 6. 3. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord, Prov. 2. 4, 5. If thou seekest her as Silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ;*
then

*then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord,
and find the knowledge of God.*

3. It is the most *Honourable* Trade: He that is engaged in this Merchandize of buying the Truth, is indeed one of the *Royal Company*. There are some employments, which, though gainful, are yet counted sordid and base, and generous spirits scorn to take them up in hopes of a little profit: there are others which are of credit and good repute among men; but they are all of them mean and contemptible, compared with this, and not the best of them can equal it in honour. This man hath the least need of any to be ashamed of his Occupation: yea, and it is the way to honour and preferment: wisdom exalts her Customers not only to wealth, but also to great dignity, Prov. 3. 16. *In her left hand are riches and honour; and chap. 4. 8, 9. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee, &c.* They are none but excellent ones that are in Partnership with these men; and they are infinitely glorious personages whom they drive their dealing with; *God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

4. It is the most *satisfying* Trade. The great Truths of the House of God, are soul-contenting

54 Buy the Truth, and sell it not.

contenting things, Psal. 36. 8. *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thine house.* It is a very joyful thing to frequent this market, Psal. 122. 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord;* and there is abundance of Reason for it, for the dealing is in Soul-satisfying things: they are things full of marrow and fatness, and may therefore well cheer the heart; Men make a great deal of bustle and do in this world, trading and bartering, but it is all with abundance of disquiet: there is a great deal of noise made, and but a little content taken, Eccl. 1. 8. *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, the ear is not satisfied with hearing.* When men suffer loss, it vexeth them, and when they get gain, it doth not quiet them, and what is the reason, but because they are occupied about things that have not the matter of satisfaction in them? *They spend money for that which is not bread, and labour for that which satisfieth not,* Isa. 55. 2. whereas the very discovery of this Pearl of Truth in the Gospel Field, fills the man with joy; how much more raised then must he needs be, when he hath made it his own, though in exchange for all that he had?

5. It is the most Necessary Trade. Men
may

may do better without any thing than Truth. It is an observation which some have made, that the bigger half of trades and Merchandize in the world is occupied about trifles, or things of which there is no necessity, but it would be as well, if not better with mankind, if they were without them : and truly, if you please to add the other half too, you shall find all little better than toys, if compared with the Truth. As much as the life is better than raiment, as far as the soul excels the body, as highly as eternity is to be preferred before time ; so far is the purchase of Truth more necessary than the gaining of every other thing in the world. *Job* therefore prizeth this, not only above his conveniences but beyond all his necessities whatsoever, *Job. 23. 12.*

6. They trade for the most *Durable* Estate : It is that which, when once gotten, will abide by them ; hence that *Pro. 8. 18. Riches and honour are with me : yea, Durable Riches and Righteousness.* The whole traffick of this world is occupied about perishing things : there is a moth in their garments, and rust upon their metalls, a thief watcheth for both, ready to ca

56 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

away: all these things have wings, and are every moment ready for the flight, Pro. 23. 5. *Riches certainly make themselves wings, &c.* and no man ever yet had the art to clip them, or if they did, they soon grew again: but Truth is a never failing treasure; if once a man hath gotten it for his own, it will never forsake him. Truth is in it self *Incorruptible*, 1 Pet. 1. 23 and hence is incapable of being corroded by *moth* or *rust*, and it lies out of the reach of the *Thief*, he that possesseth the Truth cannot be robbed of it. There are indeed some things here below, that are more durable than others, and hence (comparatively) are more desirable, on which account the worlds prudent men endeavour to convert their estates as fast as they may with convenience, into them; such are Houses and Lands: and the Psalmist gives us the reason for it, Psal. 49. 11. *Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations.* But the man who hath turned his all into Truth, and settled that as his proper inheritance, hath infinitely out-witted these men. Truth is an everlasting Treasure, and he that hath bought it shall have something to live on, when the other shall be like the beasts that perish; and is it so? Let then the worlds

worlds, *Ishmaels* mock on; and let pious souls bear it patiently, until the happy time shall come, wherein all accounts shall be adjusted, and even reckonings made up: and if then, these Merchants shall be found fools, let the wicked triumph for ever: but know it assuredly how scornfully soever they now deport themselves toward the children of Wisdom, *the Upright shall have dominion over them in the morning.*

2. The world is also no less prejudiced at Godly men for their tenaciousness of the Truth, to see them hold it so resolutely, and being so unperfwadable to part with it, by all the utmost endeavours used to bring them off, and win them to relinquish it; when they see how many, and what cunning attempts there are made to draw them over to give consent, or to force them upon making a sale, and after all, the one is rejected with an holy scorn, and the other is born with an invincible patience, and the most politickly contrived, and industriously prosecuted endeavours do finally prove unsuccessful: when they see how many and grievous things they suffer for the Truth sake, and all cannot prejudice them against it, but rather confirms their love to it, and adds strength to their
pious

58 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

pious resolutions never to forgo it; with how great *cheerfulness* they can take the being *spoyled* of their goods, deprived of their liberties, yea, and being robbed of their very lives, and all this because they will not part with Truth; yea, they do the more closely hug and embrace it; they hereupon do certainly conclude these men to be far gone of a frenzy: especially when they take notice how firm they are in the maintaining of the least Truth, so as rather to pull all the world about their ears, then let a syllable of it go; will (with the Three Children) run the venture of a *Fiery Furnace*, rather than bow the body to an *Image*; hazard the sufferings of all manner of tortures before they will throw a little frankincense into the fire, (as did the Primitive Christians) lose all the favours and preferments they have enjoyed, and might otherwise have still possessed, rather than Worship God otherwise than as he hath appointed; yea dye the most cruel death rather than deny any one article of Gods revealed Will; they either rail at them as willful, turbulent, schismatical; the disturbers of Church and State; or else commiserate them as men intoxicated with conscientious niceties, whereby they become the unhappy disturbers of their own quiet;
but

but hold; these men are neither mad nor drunk, as you suppose them to be, but in their right mind, and very well able to give a truly rational account of what they do; yea such as (if you will approve of the rules that wise merchants pretend to follow) will clear up their discretion : For,

I. The world hath not hitherto bid them a valuable price for the Truth, nor any thing near one; and therefore no wonder if they blow upon it with holy scorn: If Satan either could or would have performed that offer which he made to the man Christ, Mat. 4. 8, 9. *All this will I give thee, &c.* upon his parting with the Truth, yet if he had accepted it, he had been undone by the bargain. If men that come to you to buy your earthly merchandize, do proffer you a price far short of that which you value the commodity at, it will greatly incense you, and you will scarce vouchsafe so much as to give them an answer, but turn your backs upon them and be gone, as looking upon your selves to be mockt; and it is out of question, that when Satan and his Instruments have made their largest offers to godly men to win them from the Truth; when they have told them, they shall have their lives, enjoy their liberties, their estates, yea,

60 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

yea, and be advanced to great honours and preferment, and made to enjoy whatsoever the world can afford to make them happy, they have offered them but a *Counter* for a *Guiney*, but a *Bristow stone* for an *Oriental Pearl*; yea, not so much as that, but indeed have sought to impose upon them the greatest cheat that they possibly can: and yet if they do not readily and chearfully embrace the motion, and take in with the offer, they are fools, and sots, and what not? in mens esteem; whereas if they should be induced to part with it on these tearms, it must needs argue them either of gross ignorance, or indeliberate folly; either that they have not a right understanding of the value of Truth, or are surprized unawares with a deluding false opinion of the worth of these worthless things. But he that hath truly bought the Truth, knows its worth too well to lay it in the ballance against these things, and finds every day more of experimental sweetness in it, then to put it off for such gewgaws and childish fooleries as are here offered to him; and what a vile and injurious thing is it for any to make offers to men to make fools of them, and when they have so done, to rail at, and call them so, because (through grace)

grace) they have been too wise to accept of the offer ?

2. There would greater harm arise to them from parting with it, then all that the worlds malice can bring upon them for keeping of it. They are too precipitant who think that every thing is presently to be thrown away as useless, which hath some little inconveniences that attend it, for upon this score men must sooner or later put themselves out of all : but all circumstances and consequences are to be weighed, and men must set the advantage over against the damage. The Merchant will bear many a puff of wind, and suffer great difficulties and dangers before he will cast his Wares Over-board, especially if they be of great worth ; and here are two points of wisdom which have great sway with him in the deliberating on this case, viz.

1. That if he keep the Truth safe, it will plentifully reward him for all these sufferings. Why did *Moses* prefer *Affliction* for Truths sake, before the *Egyptian* Crown ? see Heb. 11. 26. The man is well satisfied that earth and hell can never undo him so long as he keeps the Truth, he can never

62 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

never be ruined whilst this is his portion. This will pay for estate, credit, liberty, life; make plentiful amends for revilings, confiscations, reproaches, imprisonments, bonds, and the cruellest tortures which the spiteful wit of man can invent or inflict; hence *none of all these things moved Paul*, but his whole care was (whatever befell him) not to forgo the Truth, Acts 20. 22, 23, 24. and in the midst of all sore and bitter oppressions, the Church comforteth her self with that, that she had not forsaken the Truth, Psal. 44, 17. *All that is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, nor dealt falsely in thy Covenant.*

2. That if he sells the Truth to buy his peace with the world, he lays down too great a summe for it, and shall certainly purchase to himself the greater misery, when God sold him the Truth, it was under the straitest and most solemn engagement never to sell it again; this was one of the articles in the contract which past between them, *and how shall he do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* he knows that by keeping of it (let the worst come that can) he shall but purchase to himself a created malice, which can
no

no farther vent it self but by inflicting bodily sufferings upon him; he shall no more but expose himself to their fury, whose farthest power can extend *but to kill the body*, and he sees no reason to be amazingly affrighted at that, having the prospect of an endless life in his eye; but he is certain that if he shall cowardly or perfidiously betray his trust, and part with the Truth, he shall procure to himself the sorest indignation of the great God, incur his infinite displeasure, and throw himself upon his wrath, *who can destroy both Soul and Body in hell for ever*; and that he is with highest reason afraid of: he bears it in remembrance continually who it is that hath said, *whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father, with the holy Angels, Mat. 8. 38.* and he thinks it a thousand time more eligible to undergo the worst that the world can do, rather than to throw himself upon the woful hazard of being disowned by the Lord of glory, in that day when it will be nothing less than hell so to be: and hence he hath drawn up, and fixeth himself upon this resolve, that he will leave himself to the sovereign dispose of Gods Providence, and if he
sees

64 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

fees meet so to permit, let them do their pleasure, and glut their rage upon this clay house, till they can do no more, but when they have done all, the Truth they shall never pluck from me, but I will live and dye by it; and if thus to do must be accounted to be mad, and to play the fool, let every true Christian be resolute to be yet more mad, and still to play the fool more, for the sake of *Christ* and the *Truth*.

USE III. *For Exhortation and Direction:* and there are two branches of the Exhortation; Buy the Truth, and Sell it not: which may be applied distinctly.

I. In the first place, let it be to invite customers to come and *Buy*. Truths market is kept up in these *Ordinances*, which we are called to dispense; and here are a great many lookers on that vouchsafe to come where this heavenly treasure is opened, and exposed to their view; and you do well (so far) that you do come; who knows but that God may perswade you to buy also before you go? his preventing grace may meet with men unexpectedly. But let me ask what (I pray) do you come for? is there any thing here to be had that you are apprehensive

henfive that you have a need of, and are therefore making enquiry after? if they be the world's dignities and preferments that you would have, you are more like to lose than get them by coming hither; you must go to *Princes Courts*, or *Kings Palaces* if you hope to find them: it it be the Earths Gallantry and outward Bravery, or any other thing which may afford content to your carnal Lusts that you are inquisitive after, neither do we pretend to offer such things as these, but counsel you to mortifie such lusts, and to exercise sobriety in the use of those things; but if you are resolved to have them, you must go to the Worlds Market for them: here is nothing but truth set out at this *Fair*, and if you have no occasion for that, you are like to lose your labour in coming hither: But if that be it which you do indeed stand in need of, here it is, and you shall have it good cheap: and why will you not *Buy the Truth*? One would think that this Trade should never be dead, that Truth should never have occasion to complain for want of Customers; that this Market rather than any other, should be crouded so full of *Buyers*, that there should be no room left for *Gazers*. But the truth is, the bigger part by far of the Children of men have

E

other

other Bargains in making, and are deeply engaged in contriving and pursuing of them; and all their business in turning in hither, is only for a little diversion, and yet so, they can hardly divert their minds from that which they have in chase; but whiles their bodies are in the house of God, *their hearts are after their covetousness.* But give me leave now to borrow the liberty of a few words with you who never have bought the Truth, since you seem for the present to have a little leisure to be spoken withal. It may be some of you can call to your remembrance, that the best and most profitable Bargains that ever you made in all your lives, were some that you lighted upon unexpectedly, and never dreamt of them before: I am sure God himself hath said in our present case, *I am found of those that sought me not, Isai. 65. 1.* the Grace of God evermore prevents the wills of men, and begins the happy Bargain between them and him, for which they shall bless his Holy Name for ever: and therefore, what though you are come hither on no such errand, nor had the least intent of buying any thing that is here to be sold, but it was the furthest thing from your thoughts; yet what if God and you should make a match before you part? suppose you
 should

should buy up truth, and get a sure Possession of it as your own before you leave this place; what harm? why may it not be so? I am sure God (whose the Truth is) is willing to it; & I am resolved (by his help) to do the utmost that I am able to set it forward: give me leave therefore to do these two things. 1. *To commend this Commodity to your buying.* 2. *To instruct you in or about the buying of it.*

I. *By way of Motive* : And here I might preface this commendation, by blowing upon all other Commodities whatsoever, and telling you what poor, empty, unprofitable trash they are in comparison with this: what childish Baubles and Rattles all the Worlds Honours are; What Shells and Husks, and Chaffe are all its Riches; What Shadows and insubstantial things are all its pleasures; that he who labours for them, doth but labour for the *East-wind*; he that layes out Money for the procuring of them, doth it for *that which is not bread*; he that purchaseth and possesseth them, inherits nothing but *vanity and vexation of spirit*: & he that hath taken the greatest pains, and been followed with the best success inquest of them, after all his toil, travail and expence, sits down in the conclusion as unsatisfied as

66 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

ever, and when I have said it, I might make it all good (and a great deal more) as by the testimony of the Word of God, which is full and clear in this point, so by the confession of a great multitude of Men, who have found it to be so by unhappy experience; and let not this consideration be neglected. But let me acquaint you, that Truth needs no foil to set it off, it having sufficient worth and excellency in it self, to commend it to the Children of men; though they observe it not by reason of inadvertency, who if they did consider this *Field*, would surely buy it: and to help you to this discovery, and to engage your Minds, and Hearts to it.

I: Let me advise you to ask of them that have bought the Truth, and that have paid the dearest for it, how they like their Bargain, and whither ever they saw cause to repent of it. *Abraham* left his native Land, and his Fathers House, he turned a Pilgrim and Stranger in the Land of *Canaan*, where he had no possession of his own, besides a Burying-place; nor had he any fixt abode, but went to and fro, dwelling in Tents, and all this for the Truth.

Isaak and *Jacob* continued in the same Land

Land after him, and went through the like hardships; and did they ever study after a return? The Apostle acquaints us that they had the opportunity easily to have done it, if they had had any mind to it, *Heb. 11. 15.* *Moses* was another, and he voluntarily forewent the riches and glories of a Kingdom (and that one of the most flourishing then in the World) for the Truth: and that not in a pang of rash and heady zeal, without deliberation; but he did it upon a free and premeditated *Choice*; he laid them together weighed them in the ballance, and he refused the one on purpose that he might enjoy the other; and that was not when Truth was drest up in outward bravery, having power, prosperity and credit attending upon it, but when it was beset with all manner of difficulties and afflictions, and he saw that he must throw himself into a world of trouble for its sake, this hindred not his Election, nor discouraged his heart in it, *ver. 24.* and do we find that ever he revoked it, or so much as befooled himself for being guilty of a mistake in what he had done? No, neither he, nor any other that did as he, and with the same sincerity ever repented them. The Truth hath given unto all those that have been possessed of it such plentiful satisfaction,

70 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

satisfaction, that for *sweetness* it outdid the *Honey-Comb*, and for *preciousness* it went beyond the most *refined gold* in their estimation, *Psal.* 19.9,10. and they have both verbally and practically acknowledged that it was so. If you can meet with but one true Christian in the whole World, that will upon advice asked of him, give you counsel against it, and tell you that it is too dear a penniworth ; nay, if they do not tell you that there is so much to be gotten by the purchase, and they have already experienced so much of excellency & ravishing delight in it, that they would not exchange it for the quintessence of earthly treasures; and that nothing repents them but only that they drave this Bargain no sooner, but foolishly stood off trifling so long; then let it alone and say no more; but this shall you never do. I have read the story of a *Christian*, who bound over all his estate to a *Heathen* for security, assuring him that if he would embrace the Truth, it should never repent him, but that he should be enforced to say there was unspeakably more of soul satisfaction in it than in the whole world beside: nor was it long before he returned him his Bond cancelled, assuring him that he had enough in hand for his acquittance, and better security for that which was remaining; and why will not you try too?

2. Listen

Buy the Truth, and Sell it not. 71

2. Listen to such as have the Truth offered to them, and they have been so imprudent as to refuse to come to the price of it, and hear how they bewail it. The Wise-man brings in such an unhappy wretch thus bewailing and bemoaning himself, Prov. 5. 12, 13. *How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof? and have not obeyed the voice of my Teachers, nor inclined mine ears to them that instructed me?* Did you never take a turn with some forlorn creature, that had so long despised the Gospel-offers, till he was forsaken of God, and given up to the rack of a tormenting conscience? or did you never stand by the bedside of a profligate Prodigal, that had spent his market day in buying trifles, in following of his lustful pleasures, and in hording up of earthly treasures, and perceived his parting Soul stand trembling upon his quivering lips, and groaning out this its last ejulation? *Oh how wretchedly have I outstood the happy advantage of Truths Market? how seriously, how solemnly, how frequently did God offer it to me? at how easy rates might I have been made the blessed owner of it? how long did he stand waiting upon me, and knocking at my door? what pathological and heart-melting arguments did he use with me to have perswaded me? and oh how happy had I*
now

72 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

now been, had I but accepted of it? but I slept out that precious harvest; I loytered out that opportunity of the Market; I despised the offer that was made unto me; I entertained a vile and low opinion of the Truth, and took delight in scoffing at counsels, and quenching of the stirrings of the blessed Spirit with me: and now the day is over, the time is gone, the opportunity is lost: and I for this vile neglect of mine am lost for ever: Oh for one of those Sabbaths, those Lectures, those precious seasons of grace! That I had but known those things of my peace in the day of them! but they are hidden from me; and because I despised them whilst I did enjoy them, I must have them no more; and for want of that slighted Truth, which once I might have been owner of, I am undone and must perish everlastingly. And what impression doth this make upon your hearts? let me tell you these are no fancies, nor Romantick Stories, but realites; take them then as rousing hints to awaken you from your soul-destroying carelesness, and put you upon it to use utmost endeavours, whilst you may, to prevent such deadly reflections of your own souls. But,

3. The last and principal motive which I shall urge, is this, viz. Consider that if once
you

you can make the Truth yours, it will certainly make you happy. All men are naturally inquisitive about felicity ; it being that which the natural cravings of the rational appetite, put into man in his Creation, are restlessly carried forth after : there is none of the children of men but are saying, *who will shew us good ?* The great design which every man hath on foot is to compass it ; though the greatest number of them labour of woful disappointments : now, I can assure you, that that Happiness which men are at so much study in seeking after, and have been at so much labour and pains to obtain, and have yet been so horribly cheated of their expectation after all, is in this way infallibly to be attained, *viz. Buy the Truth and you without doubt shall purchase felicity with it.* Prov. 8. 34, 35. *Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gate, waiting at the posts of my doors ; for whosoever findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.* Truth is it self the Blessedness of the Understanding, and it brings that good with it which must needs happify the whole man. I have offered something already under the former use, in the deserved commendation of *Truth*, in vindication of

the

74 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

the wisdom of all those that drive a constant trade in it: but such is the great worth and most admirable excellency of it, that there cannot be too much said in its praise here: therefore let me further say of it,

1. It will make you inchoatively happy in this Life. Buy the Truth and it will bring you into acquaintance with the beginnings of glory, and that in these several respects;

1. It will be a *safeguard* to you in your passage through an evil world. It will keep and preserve you from all those uncountable mischiefs that lye strewed in the way you have to go: no enemy can do you any harm, no Devils or evils can prevail upon you, whilst you keep a firm possession of the Truth. It is a well fortified Garrison, and as long as you keep your selves within it, you cannot be wounded: do you but keep the Truth, and it will undoubtedly keep you, Prov. 2: 10, 11, 12. and chap. 4. 5, 6. *For-sake her not, and she shall preserve thee; love her, and she shall keep thee.* We shall therefore find David when complaining of the Oppression of his enemies, making of such a request, Psal. 43. 3. *O send forth thy light, and thy Truth, let them lead me, and let them bring*

Buy the Truth, and sell it not. 75

bring me unto thy holy hill : he looked upon it as his sufficient security : his meaning is, that he would be under the conduct of Gods Word, or of those Saving Truths of God, and that shall satisfie him, he desires no more ; and Psal 86. 11. *Teach me thy way, O Lord ! I will walk in thy Truth.* It was a day of sore trouble, as appears by the beginning of the Psalm ; and this is the help which he seeks against it. If you had all the world in combination against you, and all the Devils of hell added to them, to strengthen the Conspiracy, yet under this banner you should vanquish them all : this will make discovery of all those secret designs that are contrived against you ; it will point you to the places where their ambushments are laid to entangle you, and help you to escape them, yea it will give you the victory, and afford you a glorious triumph after all the furious skirmishes that you have been engaged in ; *You shall see a thousand to fall at your right-hand, and ten thousand at your left, but it shall not come nigh unto you :* It was never yet known that Truth ever left any, whom it undertook to be a convoy unto, till it had brought them clear through the deserts, and set them beyond the reach of any mischief.

76 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

2. It will be a *sure light* to guide you through all the intricacies of the way that you have to go in. *David* professeth this concerning the Word of God, which is the Truth I am now treating of, Psal. 119. 105. *Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* If you will but follow the guidance of the Truth, and hearken to its direction, you shall never wander: you have abundance of the darkness of ignorance within you, and it is not in man of himself to direct his own steps; but this will shew you the right way, and direct you to the path you should go in: There are a great many of, stumbling blocks that lye in your way, which Satan and his instruments are laying there, that they make you to stumble and fall, but this shall help you over them all: There are a great many by-paths and cross ways which lead into danger, and will certainly leave those that take them in a pathless wilderness, where they shall be in peril of being lost; but this shall deliver you from them, and point you out the right way; and teach you how to keep it: This shall be a voice behind you saying *this is the way, walk in it, when you are ready to turn to the right, or to the left hand.* Hearken to its voice, and you shall never go astray, take its directions, and there is no danger

danger of your being bewildred and lost; follow its advice, and you shall not be drawn aside, Prov. 7. 4, 5. and chap. 2. 9. *Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgments, and equity, and every right path.*

3. *It will be a good companion unto you; it will stand by and stick close to you, when all other of your friends and companions shall be removed far away from you; it will be a friend at all times, and cleave closer to you than a brother; when father and mother shall forsake you, then will it take you up: in the house of mourning, it will be a comforter: the Psalmist found it so to him, Psal. 119. 50. as you are travelling through this solitary and howling wilderness, it will keep fast by you; so that you shall never be left alone, or need to want good company; but shall have the benefit of this sweet counsellor to afford you direction and consolation; though you should be carried to Prisons, and thrown into dungeons, there it will hold conference with you, and give you its advice.*

4. *It will furnish you with sufficient supply in all your adversity. As it will be a portion which you can never be robbed of, so it will be a full and satisfying portion when you are*
stript

78 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

stript of every other thing: It will (in the absence of them) be to you instead of father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, gold and silver, food and raiment, health and strength ; these may all of them be taken away from you, but Truth never can : *David* prefers it to great spoil, Psal. 119. 162: This Truth contains in it great and precious promises, with which, he that hath them may live well enough upon a rock ; here is laid up that *hidden manna*, which will satisfy your hungry souls in the desert ; this is it *which will give you your fill in the time of famine*, that will deliver you from all fear of evil, when there is nothing else but evil encompassing you round about, and will carry you secure through a land of drought.

5. It will be a *Cordial* to you in all your *spiritual faintings* ; *David* therefore prays for this in his deepest dejection, Psal. 119 25. *my soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken me according to thy word.* This will give you songs in the night , when all creature comfort is withdrawn, it will derive secret and solid refreshment to your spirits, when they are under never so great pressures: There are wonderful Consolations are wrapt up in this Truth, such

such as are able to fetch a dying soul to life again, and restore it to vigour: it will hold your heads, chear up your hearts, and bind up your wounds; *David* found all this by plentiful experience, *Psal.* 94: 19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.*

6. *It will advance you to the highest communion in this life; even to Communion with God himself.* God hath declared himself to be a God of Truth, and therefore if Truth dwells with us, God also dwells with us: if we have Truth for our Possession, then we have God for our portion, and if we abide by the Truth, he also will abide by us. The Truth will lead us, and bring us to the *Holy Hill and Tabernacle where God dwells*, as *Psal.* 43. 3. nay, it is that which will make us to abide in God, *1 John* 2. 27. and hence one great end of preaching the Gospel of Truth, is to promote this communion, *1 John* 1. 3. *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* God loveth the Truth, and all those that love it, and his secret shall be with them: and what can this be less

80 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

less then happiness in this life, to live in the fellowship of the Great God?

7. It will *support* you under, and carry you *cheerfully* through the *agonies of Death*. Then to be sure (if not before) all other comforts will fail you, every other prop that hath sometime been a relief to you, will then slip from under you, but then Truth will underset you, and keep your souls from sinking; this holds up *Hezekiahs* heart in the very prospect of a grave and rottenness, *Ila. 38.*
3. Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth. This makes *Paul* to clap his hands, when he apprehends the time of his offering to approach, *2 Tim. 4. 7. I have kept the Faith.* Look over all these things, and now say, what would you have more of happiness, till you are landed in the place of full enjoyment? why *Buy the Truth*, and it shall be all this to, and do all this for you: but then,

2. After it hath been so advantageous to you in this life, it will also lead you safe home into the fruition of perfect felicity in the other life; and here observe,

1. It will bring you to the *Beatifical Vision*

sion. All streams do naturally lead down to the Ocean; and all Divine Truths do as certainly carry us home to God himself, who is the Essential Truth. As Truth comes from God, so it leads back to God; and although this vision be not the whole of Eternal Felicity, yet it is both a main and principal part of it, (hence Heavens Glory is so often expressed by it in the Scriptures; as in Mat. 5. 8. *They shall see God, i. e. be happy*: So 1 John 3. 2. *We shall see him as he is*: and Heb. 12. 14. *Without which no man shall see God*;) and also it implies all the rest, whatsoever can be thought of with it; for all joyes and pleasures accompany this vision, Psal. 16. 11. *In thy presence (or sight) is fullness of Joy.* The purchase of Truth gives us an imperfect sight here, and that is in order to perfection: Heaven therefore may be included in that *Holy Hill*, which David prays that the Truth may bring him into; Psal. 43. 3.

2. It will place you upon an Heavenly Throne, and put upon your heads an Everlasting Crown, Prov. 4. 8, 9. *a Crown of Glory shall she deliver to thee.* This is contained in all those faithful and true promises, which all of those embrace, and purchase for their own, who *buy the Truth*; and if these promi-

Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.

ses are parts of the Truth, then they must of necessity be fulfilled, or else Truth it self might become false, which is impossible. God himself hath by his own word and engagements, annexed an *Eternal Kingdom, an Immortal Crown, an Everlasting Weight of Glory* to the Truth, and they go together inseparably; so that he that Buys the Truth, hath all this into the Bargain, and that fully and inviolably confirmed to him in the same hour that he buys it: hence Believers are called the *Heirs of Salvation*, because it is part of Truths Inheritance, and is with it confirmed to them.

3. In a word, that I may summe up all in one; it will fulfill for you all the promised good, and give you the full and everlasting possession of it. This Truth is the security of the promise, it is the first fruit of the purchase, it is the earnest of the Inheritance, and therefore in it he that buys it may find all the good that is to be had in the Kingdom of Glory, secured to him: and who can tell the vastness of the store, the infiniteness of the treasure that is laid up there? if that saying of the Apostle, *1 Cor. 2. 9. Eye hath not seen,*
Etc.

Buy the Truth, and Sell it not. 83

&c. may truly be applied to those things which the people of God have in hand, which are but the sips and foretastes, but the esseys and earnestes of glory, what tongue then can express, or heart conceive, what are those reserves in the Covenant, which are kept for the entertainment of those happy souls afterward, who have had so much wisdom here as to sell all and *Buy the Truth*? Doubtless those that are happified with the *Fruition* of these ineffable things, can after a more ravishing manner use the words of the Queen of *Sheba*, and say; that they had (in the Country of their former abode) heard glorious things reported of those mansions of delight, and high happiness which was reserved for them, yea so much as the credit whereof induced them to adventure their all upon the hopes of enjoying it; but that *the one half was not told them*; Nor indeed are the narrow souls of the children of men capable of making room enough to entertain the apprehension of these things, so long as they are straitned in a body of frail flesh; & now, what do you say to all this? will you blow upon the Truth still? will you yet despise it? or will you not rather say, is this the excellent profit of buying the Truth, what

84 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

shall we do then that we may become owners of it.

2 It now follows that I proceed to give some Direction about what is to be done by you, if you would not fail of getting and possessing the Truth as your own, or obtaining a sure and never failing title to it : and here,

1. In order to your making of this purchase, you must come to the Truths Market, with a real purpose to buy it, and that you may thus do, it is requisite that you apprehend, believe and practice such things as these ;

1. You must believe that there is such a thing as Truth. Ignorance is an unavoidable ground of negligence ; many a man doth therefore live contentedly without a thing, and never so much as makes enquiry after it, because he knows not that there is any such thing to be had, which if he were well informed of, it would be the next thing that he would be laying out for : Now that there is such a Rule by which fallen man be sufficiently directed to the attainment of eternal life ; that the sinner is not left under an absolute necessity of perishing, for want of a
clue

clue to guide him in the right-way to escape the wrath, and obtain the favour of God; that infinite mercy hath not only provided a remedy for all that misery which mans Apostacy hath brought upon the world, but also pointed out the way by which he may come at it, the Scriptures do abundantly assure us; yea Christ affirms it of himself that he is so, John 14. 6. *I am the way, the Truth, and the life*; and all the counsels and encouragements propounded in the Gospel, are given to this end, to perswade us that this is attainable by us in some way or other.

2. You must also believe that you have it not in your own possession by nature: it is a Rule which the Apostle lays down, and it is to be applied universally, 1 Cor. 3. 18. *If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* It is the everlasting undoing of a great many men, that they are blown up with a fond conceit that they are born possessed of the Truth; that they have in them naturally a sufficient light to direct them in the right way, and guide them safely home to blessedness, see Job. 11. 12. *Vain man would be wise though man be born like the Wild Asses Colt.* *Vain*, Hebr. *Empty*; i. e. empty of wisdom,
of

of knowledge, and of Truth; viz. that which is Divine and Saving. *Would be wise*; i. e. he would be thought so to be, he chal-
 lengeth it to himself as his priviledge: *Wild
 Asses Colt*; which are reported the most sot-
 tish, stupid and foolish among all the sensi-
 tive creatures; and this is one great reason
 why so few came to *draw water at these wells
 of Salvation*, to buy Truth at this Fair, because
 they are conceited that they have it already:
 and who will lay out his mony to buy that of
 which he hath store enough at home? This
 will either keep men from coming at all to
 Wisdoms School (and some there be who
 have said, why should we go to the Ordinan-
 ces? we can hear no more there than what
 we already know as well as the Preacher,)
 or else if they do come, because it is the cu-
 stom so to do, it will carry them forth, to
 carp, scoff, flout, & deride at every thing that
 is there offered; and so they are far from
 being like to barter: they are the *thirsty* that
 are invited to come; Isa. 55. 1. but he that
 is full cannot thirst; *the full soul loaths the
 honey-comb.*

3. You must apprehend that you do real-
 ly want it: the former will be insignificant
 without this be added to it. That which

a man knows he hath not, if with all he is not apprehensive of a need that he hath of it, but supposeth that he can do well enough without it, nay possibly would esteem it not a favour, but a burden to have it, he will very contentedly let that thing alone: I before intimated that Thirst drives men to the waters; now to Thirst there is supposed, not only the absence, or not having of drink, but also a craving appetite, filling us with a real sense of the want of it, and convincing us of mischief and misery like'y to ensue, if we cannot obtain it, and to such as these it is that these waters are nextly offered on sale, John 7. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* You must see and find that you have lost the way of peace, and are bewildred in the crooked paths that lead to destruction, and be convinced that the more you seek to disentangle your selves, the more you are beswamp't in this desert place: that you are benighted in this land of darkness, among the horrible pits, into which falling, you may well reckon that you tumble into ruine; and that except it please God to enlighten you with his Truth, and send that forth to guide and lead you, you must inevitably be lost eternally: you must be deeply convinced that your everlasting happiness

88 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

pineness depends absolutely upon your having the Truth to be your Pilot to steer your course for you ; *your Lamp to enlighten your darkness, and shew you the path of life.* It is fullness that gives encouragement to sloth, and perswades men to fold their hands ; but want, when once it comes to be thoroughly felt, and the misery of it pincheth the man, it will drive him to seek out for a supply.

4. You must apprehend & believe where Truth is to be had: the want of a right understanding of this hath proved the ruine of many an one, they mist the right place ; and so were put off with a cheat. The Truth is not opened in every mart, nor to be bought at every shop; but if you would know where you may find it, and not miss of it, know, that it is laid up in the Word of God, and in these chambers you may be sure to meet with it; and therefore your way is to be much in converse with the Holy Scriptures, so you may be enriched with this treasure; hear David, *Psal. 119. 98, 99. Thou through thy Commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my meditation.* God by his Spirit sells the Truth, to those that seek it, James 1 5. *If an*

man

any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally. You must therefore be much and earnest in prayer to God for it; so was David, Psal. 119. 18, 33, 34. It is to be found in our sequestred retirements from all other encumbering affairs, and setting our selves to ponder upon it, Prov. 18. 1. *through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermedleth with all wisdom.* You must therefore disengage from these distractions, and get liberty to make this your business: It is to be had in the company and communion of the people of God, Prov. 13. 20. *he that walketh with wisemen, shall be wise;* you must then chuse such as these are for your companions, and forsake the society of the worlds fools, i. e. of ungodly men, for it follows, *but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* It is especially to be gained in the house of God, and at his Ordinances, in which (by Gods own appointment) the Truth is brought forth, sometimes one part of it, sometimes another; and he hath given to his servants in charge, that they do present it before, propose the terms to, and use their best endeavour to drive the bargain with men; these therefore must be frequented; hence they are the persons who are de-

clared

90 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

clared blessed *who wait at the posts of the doors of Wisdoms House, Prov. 8. 34.*

5: You must not only come hither, but it must be with a purpose to buy the Truth: this ought to be your design, the very errand that brings you hither, the business that you come about; and therefore you must ask and enquire after it. It is true, Gods grace prevents us, and first begins with us, and he always offers before we ask: but yet it is as true, that before a bargain be thoroughly driven between God and a Sinner, he is wont to make us to feel our emptiness and want, and thereupon raise up in our hearts such a sense as drives us to ask, to wait for, and to cheapen it: the man before that time, was wont to go to the House of God; he frequented the Ordinances after a formal and customary manner; and if a reason had then been asked of him why he went, and what he went for, it would have put him hard to it, to have given a rational answer, for indeed he went he well knew not for what, and thereupon he used to come away again, as wise as he went, and this is the lamentable case of the greatest number of those that live in places of Gospel Light, and sit under the dispensation of the means of grace: But now the case is altered,

ed,

ed, and he can resolve you, that it is the Truth he is seeking after, he feels a destroying want of it, and hath *heard* that here it may be gotten, and this makes him to set himself to *bearken with diligence*, and bend his mind to receive the conception of things, and to wait upon God for his Spirit to make application of them to his Soul; and this is the first thing to be done, if you would buy the Truth.

2. Beware of a cheat, and therefore endeavour, so be well perswaded that it is the Truth before you buy it. If it be Truth that you come to the market for, take diligent heed to your selves that you do not carry home a lye with you in the room of it, and to put you upon it to be exceeding cautious here, let me offer these considerations.

1. There are a great many of Cheats going up and down the World, seeking to vend Falshoods under the specious pretense of Truth. If all those that open Shop, and hang out a Sign for the Truth, were indeed authorized, and set up by divine approbation, the danger would be by much the less: but there are *the Locusts of the bottomless pit*, the *Spawn of Hell*, the *spirits of Devils*, Satan's Factors

92 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

Factors, employed by him, to go up and down seeking by all means to seduce and draw souls away after them: and if they can but obtain to be believed, they will perswade us that it is nothing but Truth which they bring with them to put off: they set that mark upon the *Doctrines of Devils*, hoping that by such an imposture simple and inconsiderate Souls will be drawn into the cheat: & that they may make these to pass the better, and find the more ready reception among men, they call themselves *New-Lights*, and they are *new-Truths*, which they bring with them to impart unto us; Truths that have lain hid (in some by-corner) from the World for many Ages, and it hath laboured of great unhappiness for the want of them, but they have by some strange and wonderful way made the blessed discovery of them, and being loth to keep them only to themselves, they are (in good will) greatly desirous to expose them for the common benefit of man-kind; these our Saviour Christ would have us to beware of, & that for this reason, *Mat. 7. 15. Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps clothing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves.*

2. These Impostors have a wonderful art of palliating

and settling off their false Wares: they have gotten such a strange faculty to make a ly to look so like unto the Truth, that without an exceeding diligent inspection into it, it will not be discovered; they can readily and fearlessly father all their falshoods upon God, and call him in to patronize them, as they Ezek. 13.7. *Ye say, the Lord saith it, albeit I have not spoken.* They can horribly wrest the Scriptures. and loudly plead them to be of their mind; 2 Pet. 3.16. *They that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as also they do the other Scriptures.* But their main and most pernicious cunning of all is, by insinuation, and stealing into the hearts and affections of men; and so to colloegue them into an admiration of their persons, which (when obtained) will mightily draw them to the approbation of their Doctrines: they can cunningly carry before them a great deal of seeming Mortification, and look as if they were the most zealous men breathing for the keeping up to the highest pitch of Holiness and Worship, Col. 2.23. and they are often making very great pretenses, how much they are concerned for the good of Souls; how grieved they are to see such numbers deluded and misled by such as pretend to direct them; how mightily their notions (if embraced) would

94 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

would tend to magnifie God, and encourage sinners: thus the Apostle describes them *Rom. 16. 18.* *They that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* *2 Cor. 11. 13, 14, 15.* *Such are false Apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, &c.* *2 Tim. 3. 6.* *Of this sort are they which creep into houses, & lead captive silly Women laden with sins.* And one main engine which they make use of further to promote their design, is a strange faculty that they have gotten of undermining & scandalizing the true and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, of which sort *Paul* met with not a few, in the pursuit of his Ministry: there is therefore need of a great deal of wisdom and caution to be used by all those that would not be deceived.

3. Adde to this, and that makes it of the more weight; There is a foolish inclination in mans nature more readily to take up contented with a ly, than with the Truth. It is not to be denied but that Truth is the proper and adequate object of the understanding, which is therefore by its natural inclination carried out in the enquiry after it: Hence it follows, that men do not embrace a ly as such, but it must come to them under the

the notion and consideration of Truth, if ever they give any credit thereunto : But this doth not make the present case any whit better, but if well considered it renders it much worse ; because if they who are so seduced could be but perswaded that it is false, it were then an easie thing to beat them off from it ; but because they are confidently built on it that it is true, this makes them to hold it tenaciously ; and this still makes it the farther perillous, because the fall hath so crazed the mind of man, and confounded his apprehension of things, and so rendred his judgment so perverse, that he naturally calls good evil, and evil good, light darkness, and darkness light. His spiritual Opticks are strangely discoloured, the principles of his natural reason are become corrupt, the Rules by which he measures and weighs things are depraved ; he hath gotten to him false ballances, the ballance of deceit. The Psalmist gives the right character of a natural man in respect of his intellectuals, *Psal 58. 3. The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.* And hence it follows, that a ly easier finds entertainment with him than the Truth ; he is more ready to close in with falshood than verity, and that because his defiled understanding,

pro-

proceeding according to its false reasonings, is perswaded to believe that it sees sufficient reason for it: and this plainly speaks that there must needs be the greater reason for us to be exceeding wary to our selves, when we consider that we must in our search after Divine Truth, go against our own natural Bias.

4. Thus to be deceived will prove a very pernicious thing. If you buy up error instead of the Truth, the best of it is *You lay out money for that which is not bread*; you lose all the labour and cost which you have been at in seeking after it: and if this were all (though it is a great deal to much) it were not so bad; but there is a worse thing in it than so; for he who buyes falshood for Truth, buys a mischief instead of a blessing: and though all errors are not alike poyson, yet they are all of them infectious. All lies are of a kin, they are directly opposite to the Truth, and therefore have a natural tendency to subvert and destroy it. To be mistaken in circumstantials, is not so deadly as for a man to be so in substantials; to erre in the superstructure, is not so dangerous as to do it in the foundation: but still, every ly believed, carries a man so far away from God, who is

Truth

Truth it self; and not only so, but it also exposeth men wofully unto more; as a man that is out of his way, is more like to get further from it, than to return again, so long as he perswades himself that he is right. A man cannot love an error, but he must consequently hate the contrary truth, and that is of it self a most woful thing; but that which is far worse is, it is the ready way to be left to fall further, yea, till there be no recovery: awful is that saying of the Apostle, *2 Thess. 2. 19, 20, 21. Because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved: and for that cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a ly: that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth.* There are some errors (though all are bad) which if they were stood at, and men made no farther progress, we might have much charity for many that hold them, but the great unhappiness is, that they have proved to be the postern, at which, such as have made an eminent profession for a while, have gone back to the most damnable Apostasie; and to have at length altogether lost so much as any footsteps or marks of their former Religion: and this also saith that there cannot be too great caution used by men against

98 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

their being seduced, since it hazards their utter ruin.

Now because there is so much of weight in the right improvement of this Direction, it being of all cheats the most notoriously mischievous, to be put off with a gilded error instead of a shining Truth; I shall endeavour to give some special help here, and that,

1. By way of Caution:
2. By way of Direction:

1. By way of Caution; and here in general, Beware that you judg not of Truth by false Rules. Every smooth stone, is not to be counted a touch-stone, nor will it distinguish of Mettals; there are many Ballances that Men make, in which a thing may bear weight, which when it is brought to the Standard will there be found too light.

But more particularly, let me caution you in special against such things as the generality of men are wont to suffer themselves to be abused by: And here,

1. *Receive nothing for a Divine Truth upon the credit of men:* And therefore have a care of
of

of having mens persons too much in admiration; the Apostle complains of such, *Jude 16. Having mens persons in admiration because of advantage.* That may be true which men teach, but it is not therefore so because they teach it: it derives not its verity from their authority: hence you have a description of a right entertaining of the Word of God, in *I Thess. 2. 13. When ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in Truth) the Word of God.* That which is it self false, cannot alter the property, or become otherwise, though it should come with the authority of an Angel; hence, that, *Gal. 1. 8. Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, should preach any other Gospel than that we have Preached, let him be accursed.*

And here in particular.

I. *Make not great men your Rule.* It is an evident note of a practical Atheist, that will alwayes be of the Court Religion where he lives, be it what it will; I mean to make that the Rule of his Profession and look no farther: They put the highest affront imaginable upon man-kind, who bind them always to believe as the Church believes, thereby meaning their Rulers and Leaders; and how

100 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

rationally soever those *Pharisees* and *Elders* supposed themselves to argue against the common peoples believing in Christ, I am sure they argued irreligiously, *Job. 7. 48. Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on him?* Great men are not alwayes wise, I am sure not spiritually and savingly so, and to judg of Truth by them, is to try it by a *Lesbian Rule*, that will bend it self to the mutable humors of men, and is the ready way to make Truth (which of it self is immutable) every whit as changeable as the times and fashions.

2. *Make not Wise and Learned Men your Rule.* Men may be intimately acquainted with all the mysteries of Art and Nature, and yet be strangers to the saving Truths of the Word of God: We should constantly carry about with us that solemn expression of *Paul, 1 Cor. 1. 26. Not many wise are called;* & that of our Saviour Christ, *Mat. 11. 25. Thou hast hid those things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.* It is a worthy Observation of one, *That all the Heresies that have been so mischievous to the Christian World, were nothing else but the trimming and flourish of humane Learning.* Not that

Buy the truth, and

Learning and Knowledg are therefore to be contemned; that of *Solomon* is observable, *Eccles. 2. 13. Wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.* but withal we must remember that many men while they have thought to be wise, became fools in their imaginations; yea, how often doth it sadly prove a Truth, that the Worlds Wise men, improve their wisdom against the Truth; and counting the Doctrines of Christ to be foolishness, do set themselves directly to subvert them?

3. *Make not Holy Men your Rule; I mean such as make the greatest shew and appearance of it.* For as there is a feigned Holiness, which is the worst iniquity, so the best of men are but men; and because they are so, must be liable to mistakes: good men have had their errors, and those sometimes great ones too; however they are not of themselves infallible: those that were the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures, wherein they were guided by an infallible Spirit, and wrote as they were inspired; yet in other things they had their mistakes; Peter himself was once at least to be blamed, *Gal. 2. 11.* how much more then have we reason to suppose that others know but in part? and if we take their

102 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

all their maxims for Oracles, we may easily be misled. When *Paul* himself was the Preacher, yet the *Bereans* are commended, that they took not up his Doctrine on trust, but *searched the Scriptures* to find out the truth of it, *Act. 17. 11.*

2. *Judge not of Truth by the reception that Doctrines find in the World, or the number of followers which they have.*

And here is a double danger to be avoided :

1. There are a great many that run with the multitude, and make a loud cry, that which every one saith must needs be true : but this rule will not hold universally, if men trust to it, it will many times deceive them ; the Scripture tells us of a time, when the whole World shall wonder after the Beast, *Rev. 13. 3.* and when the Inhabitants of the Earth shall be made drunk with the wine of the Fornication of the great Whore, *Chap. 17: 1, 2.* and this properly aims at the time when there shall be a general Apostasie from the profession of the Truth, and men shall be intoxicated with the false Doctrines of *Antichrist* : The Scripture informs us that there was once a time when there was but one *Elias* to maintain the Truth of Gods Worship against

against four hundred of *Baals* Prophets: and Ecclesiastical History makes report, that once there was occasion for such a speech, *Unus Anastasius contra totum mundum*; when there was but one *Paphnutius* to withstand an whole Council in defence of the honour of Matrimony: when the Church was driven into the *Wilderness*, Truth went with her, whiles error took the Chair, and ruled at pleasure. and it is too certain that Truth doth not alwayes gain the major vote in the Christian World, but is many times confronted by the greater part of pretenders to it.

2 There are others who think to find out Truth by the fewness of its followers, and that which is consequent thereupon, the ill entertainment which it finds with the greatest number of men: and though these may possibly come nearer to it ordinarily then the others, by reason of the natural pravity of Man kind; yet neither is this a sufficient *Criterion* to judge of it by. There have been those happy times, wherein whole Councils have condemned the *Heresies* of a few; when the Synod at *Jerusalem* could unanimously bear witness against the *Judaizing Christians*, who would have subjected the converted *Gentiles* to the Law of *Moses*, *Act. 15.*

When the *Nicene Council* bare a plump Testimony against the Blasphemy which *Arius* vented to the dishonour of the Son of God, and many the like. God sometimes gives Truth a signal victory over falsehood, and it triumphs: and it is certain that Heresies, at their first rise, have met with but a few defenders or abettors, though afterward they have gathered by rolling, like a Snow-ball; pride and ambition giving a lift to promote them, till such time as the light and heat of Truth hath melted them again.

3. Determine not of Truth according to your own natural relish: Sin that dwells in men, hath made them flesh-pleasers, and the power of inbred concupiscence hath bribed their judgments, so as to perswade them to embrace the dictates of their own senses, and according as that relisheth Doctrines, accordingly, either to entertain or reject them: and this is none of the least reasons why error makes its way so fast, and so soon into the hearts of men, because there is never an one but what is cut out and adapted to give satisfaction to one Fleshly Lust or other in the Soul: And men naturally have entertained so good and charitable an opinion of themselves, and their own inclinations, that whatsoever notion is broached, which gives
the

the least encouragement to any of these, goes down glibly, and hath a good relish with them: and hereupon Satan & his factors, easily espying the advantage, & readily taking hold of it, have so accommodated false Doctrines, as to suite every fleshly lust in men, in so much as all tempers and humors may have their choice, and fit themselves with one or other to their great content. Well, Truth is of a contrary nature, and is levelled directly against all these lusts of the hearts of men, & mainly designs the battering of them down, or the mortification of them, 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, &c.* if therefore you meet with any Doctrine which endeavours to gratify your corrupt part; conclude upon one of these two, that either it is not the Truth, or if it be, that you do not rightly represent it.

4. *Rest not in the Judgment of your own Reason*: Determine not of Truth and Falseness by the ratiocinations, and comprehensions of your Judgments. There are some who would be counted and called Rational Professors, and these lay it down for a maxim, that nothing is to be received for a truth in Religion, but what our reason can fathom

To 6 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

thom, and make a *Demonstration* of, so that this must be made the very standard, and *supream judge* of Truth: whereas the Word of God acquaints us, that the Christian Religion is a great mystery, 1 Tim. 1. 3. 16. *Great is the mystery of Godliness.* It is true indeed, that there is highest reason to give credit to Divine Truths, because they are born witness unto, by him who is the *Truth*: and the authority of Divine Testimony, carries in it more force to command our credit to the things which it asserts, then all the arguments which our invention can fetch out of the Topicks of Reason, or borrow from the observation of our senses, God being to be believed for himself, because, *he cannot ly*: But to think to be able to sound the depth, and reach the bottom of these things with the short plumbline of our Understanding, is truly madness; our breath is lost before we have dived half the way; and for us to resolve to believe no more than what we are able to grasp with our reason, is distraction; and carries in it an implicit resolution to banish the most necessary and Soul Saving Truths out of our Creed: Consider here,

Your Natural Reason is prejudiced, for which consideration it cannot be a competent judge. To talk of a *Jesus Crucified* no way

ay agrees with a Grecians logick, and therefore he counts it foolishness, 1 Cor. 1. 23. *We preach Christ crucified, to the Greeks foolishness*: and hear what a Commentary Festus makes of it, Acts 25. 19. *and of one Jesus which was Dead, whom Paul affirms to be alive.* The Doctrine of the Resurrection, contradicts an Athenians Philosophy, and if Paul himself preacht it, he shall pass under the reputation of a Babler, Acts 17. 18. *some said, what will this babler say? because he Preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection.* Yea, indeed the whole counsel of God meets with enmity to oppose it in a carnal mind, no wonder then if he cannot subject his reason and judgment to it, Rom. 8. 7.

2. Your Reason is too narrow to comprehend it. Truth is a Sea unnavigable, a gulf that will not be fathomed by us; the length and breadth, height, and depth of it pass our knowledge; Job. 11. 8, 9. *It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the Sea.* Our Understanding will soon be Non-plust in these contemplations; for Faith it self is rapt into the transports of an astonishing admiration, Paul that had been admitted to
take

108 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

take a view of the glories of the *Third Heaven*, yet here he stands upon the brinks, and cries out, *Oh the Depth!* Rom. 11.33. If our Saviour *Christ* doth but discourse with *Nicodemus* about the A B C of Christianity, (the Doctrine of Regeneration) this great Doctor and Master in *Israel* is put to a nonplus, and demands *how can these things be*, Joh. 3.9. Truths light is truly dazzling, and the eyes of our Understandings are very weak and sore. Truth is *Immense*, and our Reason is *Finite*; and however opiated we may be of our selves, and proudly presumptuous of our large reaches, yet it is certain, that we may as soon comprize the Ocean in an Eg shell, as comprehend all Sacred Truths in our Reason: But,

2. Let it be by way of Direction, & here if we would not be mistaken;

1. In general, the Written Word of God is the proper and only touch stone by which we are to try and find out the Truth. Whatsoever is needful to be known in Order to our enjoyment of Communion with God in this life, and attaining eternal felicity in that which is to come, is contained in the Holy Scriptures, and there is no particular rule of practice for our guidance in the cases
which

which we can meet with, but the solution of it, is there, either expressed in so many words, or implied by necessary and undeniable consequence. Scripture perfection is one main Article of the Christian Religion, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, &c. that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works; whatsoever Doctrines are not according to it, are to be repudiated as false, Isa. 8. 20. To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.* God, who knew his own mind best, hath herein communicated it to the children of men, and hath limited our enquiry to it, Deut. 29. 29. *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and our children for ever.* And he hath declared it as a dangerous thing for us to make any additions hereunto, Prov. 30. 6. *add not unto his word, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.* Whatsoever therefore men may say, or their own thoughts dictate, be sure to ask if the Scriptures say so too, and if not, count them for fancies in Religion. But,

XIO *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

particular help for the finding out of the truth, to which end take these following Rules.

1. Be much in prayer to God for the illumination of his Spirit: It is not enough to be much in reading and studying of the Scriptures, though that also must be attended; for if we go about it with a proud confidence, leaning to our own Understandings, we expose our selves to be lost: It is easy for us to be deluded, and we know that the vilest Hereticks have sought to make the Word of God to patronize their most absurd opinions and none that labour so much as they to fill up their pages with Scripture citations, which they put upon the rack, hoping to make them confess their lies to be true. *None knows the mind of God in the Scripture but his own Spirit, and such to whom he will reveal it, 1 Cor. 2. 12, 13.* and such as would be best informed, must ask his Illumination; *Luther's bene Orasse, bene studuisse*, belongs not to Ministers only, but also to all Christians. *The Word indeed is a Lamp, and the Law is light*, but the misery is, our eyes are out, and it is not this light will open them of it self, but only the author of it. As our dependance upon the teachings of the Spirit ought not to encourage our neglect of the reading of the Word of God,

God, and attending upon those helps to acquaint our selves with it which God affords us in the Publick Ministry; so neither should we confide in our own pains, or be satisfied with our skill: we have *David* here for a pattern, who professeth Gods Law to be his *meditation day and night*, and declares that this meditation was an help to his gaining of more skill than the ancients; yet how often have we him at prayer earnestly begging, for skill, teaching, illumination, so acknowledging the subordination of his endeavours, *Psa.* 119. 18, 27, 33, 34.

2. Make use of and carry about with you some distinguishing marks of Truth, whereby it may be known and discerned from falshood and error: be sure to carry them imprinted on your minds, and be always ready to make application of them in your reading and hearing. I here shall purposely wave any discourse about the logical Analy-
sing of the Scripture, the searching out of the scope of the Text, and accommodating of all the arguments that are used to the principal drift or design, which are of excellent use to such as are furnished with the skill so to do, and also necessary for men of Learning, especially those who undertake to
be

112 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

be Teachers of others; and do require a great deal of time and study, rightly to perform it; yea and the neglect whereof, is one great reason why the Scriptures are often quoted impertinently, and besides the genuine intention of them: But this is not a thing to be attained to by every Christian, whom yet it concerns to be built upon the Truth, and warily to avoid the infection of error: there are therefore some more easily observable *Criteria*, the improving whereof will be of great use to prevent our being mistaken in this matter; & here I shall in the first place lay down this general Rule, from whence those more particular marks may be drawn; viz. *Every Truth of Religion, contributes to the great ends of it; which are, the Glorifying of God, and the furthering of our Salvation.* That these are the two main ends of the Christian Religion, every Catechise will readily inform us: Now the proper business of every Art, Science, or Doctrine is to lay down such Rules, Precepts, and discoveries, as may be proper and suitable means for the advancement of the genuine end of it; and whatsoever is not truly serviceable hereunto, is in no wise to be acknowledged as belonging to that Doctrine, but aliene from it; so that

of his de-

served glory in any point, or is destructive to the Salvation of Souls, and no ways tends to further them towards eternal life, is to be accounted falsehood; and if this Rule be duly observed, it will afford us several particular inferences, which will stand as so many differencing notes by the which the Truth may be known, viz.

1. *Every Truth agrees with the whole, and with every other Truth.* The whole body of Divine Truth is Uniform: Truth is but one, whereas error is manifold: Truth its self consenting, but error its self contradicting: there is a sweet harmony in the whole Word of God; there are no contradictions to be found there; if any shall judge that there are such, the mistake is not in the Scriptures, but in their deceived Understandings. They do all come from the same God, with whom there is no Variableness or Shadow of Turning, James 1. 17. they are nothing else but the expressions of his mind, who is always of one mind, Job 23. 13. and have been delivered in Holy Writ by him who perfectly knows his own meaning, and is not at a loss how to express it. So that whensoever you meet with two Doctrines, between which you observe a manifest inconsistency, you may and
I must

114 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

must conclude, that both of these cannot possibly be true, and also that that must be so, which is consonant with the whole Analogy of Faith, or the body of Saving Truths : such is the direction given by the Apostle; 1 Tim. 6. 3, 4. *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing.*

2. *Every Truth pays some honour to God; if the great business of Religion be to teach men how to live to God, as we are assured that it is, 1 Pet. 4. 2. i. e. how to please him, to glorify him, to do that which is acceptable to him; then every part of it must of necessity reflect some honour upon him, give him some praise: it must either discover him to us in some of his glorious perfections, or direct us to such courses wherein we may be fitted to advance his declarative glory. As God did at the first make all things for himself, so he particularly appointed reasonable creatures to glorify him actively; and that they might not miss it in this design, he hath directed them to the way wherein they may rightly accomplish it, and this Direction of his, is that which we do by way of prehem-
nence*

nence call Truth: Truth therefore is our guide, Psal. 43. 3. *Send forth thy Light and thy Truth, let them lead, (or guide) me,* from thence we infer, that every Doctrine which speaks of God unbecomingly, which in any point derogates from his Prerogative, and Divine Perfections, which reflects any dishonour upon any of his Works, and denies him his just right in any one thing that is his due, is false: And such also is that to be esteemed by us, that dischargeth man from any part of his homage and subjection to God, and opens any door of licentiousness to him, or would give him the least encouragement to do any of those things by which Gods Holy Name may be dishonoured by him; that indulgeth him in any sinful way or course.

3. *Every Truth tends to empty and abase man.* The infinite Wisdom of God, having contrived the advancement of the Salvation of Man in such a way, as that the whole honour of it should entirely redound to his own great Name, hath thereupon so ordered the way of bringing it about, as that there shall not any room at all be left for man to croud in any thing that may be an occasion for his boasting, or leave him the least place to be seen, or any thing of himself to be taken no-

116 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

tice of in the management of this whole affair: Man by the Fall (though it hath given him no Cause at all for it) is become an exceeding proud creature, and is very loth to be brought to shrink up to nothing in himself; and this makes him always ready to hearken after any thing which may blow him up with self conceitedness; such things therefore that tell him he is some body, and would make his condition something better than it really is, less dependent upon God, and more self sufficient, do wonderfully tickle his fancy: But such notions as these are, are directly contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture Doctrine: That Doctrine therefore, which makes discovery of Mans Guilt, Misery, Impotency, and represents him to himself, a creature every way depending upon the Sovereign Grace of God, for his whole Salvation, that so God may be acknowledged to be all in all, is consonant to the mind of God in the Scriptures; whereas *that which dares to pluck any one flower out of his Royal Diadem, and devest him of any part of his Prerogative, rather than man should lose the privilege of being considerable in his own Salvation, is directly against the Truth.* He that is acquainted with the Book of God cannot but acknowledge that the whole current of the
Word

Word of God carries on the design of making Fallen Man very low and vile; that *no Flesh might glory in any thing of their own, but that he who glories might glory in the Lord only, Jer. 9. 23, 24.*

4. *Every Truth leads to Jesus Christ: that great and comprehensive Truth: All the Truths of Fallen Mans Religion are summed up in the Law and the Gospel: That Christ was the great end and scope of the Law, is in so many words affirmed, Rom. 10. 4 For Christ is the end of the Law, for Righteousness to every one that believeth; and that the Gospel wholly centers in him is therein manifest, because it is the Gospel of, or concerning Christ; and the abstract of it is Faith in, & Salvation by him; hence when he sent forth his Disciples to Preach it, he gave them that for their Text, Mark. 16. 16. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believes not shall be damned. Paul therefore, who to prove his fidelity in the course of his Ministry among the Ephesians, laid down that assertion, Acts 20. 20. I kept back nothing that was profitable to you; doth yet solemnly avouch that to his Corinthians, to whom he had been alike faithful in his Preaching, 1 Cor. 2. 2. I determined to know nothing among*
you.

118 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

you but Jesus Christ and him Crucified: and if we put these two together, we may safely conclude, that he who faithfully and fully Preacheth Christ Crucified, Preacheth all the Truth which is profitable to the souls of men. Examine therefore every Doctrine, and enquire, how doth this tend to lead men home to Christ, how doth this center and rest in him? how doth it direct and lead me to fix my whole Salvation entirely upon him? and if there be no such tendency as this is in it, but contrariwise it leads you away to some other thing, and derogates from, or divides his honour, and will not yield him to be the only Saviour, it is a Doctrine of Devils, and comes not from above, but from him who is a Lyar from the beginning, and the Father of such.

5. *All Truth tends to make us more spiritual and holy. Purity is an inseparable property of the Truth, Psal. 29. 8, 9. The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. Filthiness and Defilement is proper to all error; every falshood is impure: Truth must needs be it self holy, because it hath for its author, the most immaculate Being; it proceeds from that God who is holiness it self and*

and as it is holy in it self, it likewise tends to make all them so who embrace it cordially: and therefore obeying the Truth, is said to purify the Soul, 1 Pet. 1. 22: *Seeing you have purified your Souls in obeying the Truth:* hence that of our Saviour, John 15. 3. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.* There is no Scripture Truth, but it either directs to, or encourageth Holiness, or diswades from Sin and Uncleanness: and therefore *whatsoever Doctrine savours of the Lust of the Flesh, or gives a latitude to men to live as they list, & bolsters them up in their impurities, is contradictory to the Truth, and destructive to the souls of men:* and if we shall well apply and rightly improve these few Characters thus laid down, we shall have a good help to find out the treasure which we seek, and not be cheated in it, which is the second general Direction.

3. Ask the price, and boggle not at it, but resolve to give it, he that only looks upon a commodity which he hath before him, or it may be speaks something in its commendation, but doth not go so far as to cheapen it, that man hath no intention to buy it: or if he doth make enquiry after the price, and when it is told him, he snuffs at it, and finds fault
with

120 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

with it, it shews that he hath but a little mind to be at cost for the having it : and here in general, let me leave these things with you as Truths to be believed, *viz.*

1. That if ever you come to be owners of the Truth, it will cost you something ; for though it is not to be denied, that every one that hath it, obtains it without money, and without price, yet notwithstanding he that so offers it, tells us withal, that we must buy it, *Ila. 45. 1. Come buy without money and without price.* Though we have nothing to give for it, that can in any way obscure the freeness of Gods Grace in bestowing of it upon us, as being never able, out of all our store to make up a valuable price for it ; yet there is something that we must lay down in order to our being made partakers in it which is (in mens account) money's-worth.

2. That God, who alone hath the Truth to sell, and can only make a sure conveyance of it to us, hath set a stated market-price upon it : God doth not first make the offers of it, to draw men in, and afterwards when they are engaged, come and tell them how much they must give for it ; but he deals openly with them, and as he hath de-
termin-

determined within himself what it shall certainly cost every one that hath it, so in the sending it out in Gospel Tenders, he hath fairly written the price upon it, so that every one may be able to read it, Prov. 2. begin. *If thou criest after knowledge, &c. if thou searchest her as Silver, &c.*

3. Hence it is a vain thing for you ever to think to beat down the Market. God is not like unto many men, who have their reserves and abatements, and may be in time brought to take half so much for a Commodity as they did at the first ask for it, rather than lose a good Customer: *He is of one mind;* He hath positively set the price, and he will never go from it; it is to no purpose at all to use words and arguments with him, who is not to be moved from what he hath determined: if, when you hear what the Truth must cost you, if God and you drive a Bargain, you do find fault with it; and cry out, it is abundantly too hard, if you take a disgust and go away from him, refusing to come to his terms, He matters it not. He hath declared his wonderful good will to the Children of men, in that he hath made the offers of it freely unto them, but yet he will not so undervalue the Truth, as to suffer himself

122 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

self to be beaten down in his just demands, or vouchsafe to trade with such men as would go about to cast the disparagement upon him of being an hard Dealer; he is under no necessity, he wants not our Custom, all our cost enricheth not him at all: if we go away and never buy of him he is never the poorer; its we only who shall be the losers in the winding up: as on the other hand, if we buy, ours will be the great profit; so true is that in *Prov. 9. 12.* *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy self, but if thou scornewest, thou alone shalt bear it.*

4. Hence your great business is to satisfy your selves in the infinite worth of the Truth, that so you may be perswaded chearfully to come up to Gods terms, and drive this happy Bargain. The want of this information and consequent satisfaction is the great reason why there are so many triflers, and so few buyers, among the number of those who come to the Ordinances. There is nothing that makes men to be more irresolute in a Bargain, holding them off, and continuing them in suspense, than a fear of being over-reached, and this fear is for the most part occasioned, because they have not gotten an insight into the true worth of the thing: but
could

could you see the Truth in its native colours, and be able to discern its glorious excellencies, you would be discharged of any such fears in this concern, and be satisfied that it never can be bought too dear; that if it should cost you never so much, yet the possession of it would pay for all, and reimburse you again with infinite advantage and usury. Be therefore much and frequent in meditating of those commendations which were given it in the former Use, and in the motives of this, and labour to get so deep impression upon your minds by them, as may put you beyond all hesitancy, and bring you plumply to draw up this Resolve; *That Truth you must have upon any terms; that if you put it away from you, when God is pleased to bring to you, you are enemies to your own Souls; but if you accept it on Gods terms, you are made men for ever:* And let this conclusion put you upon it to do, as he in t^e: Parable, *Mat. 13.44. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a Treasure hid in a Field, the which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that Field.*

But I shall endeavour a little more particularly to apply this Direction; and here let me say, that if ever you would come to be

124 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

be owners and possessors of the Truth, there are two things to be done; consider and practise accordingly.

1. It will cost you hard labour and great pains to obtain it. It is true, all our pains will signifie nothing, without a Divine blessing to crown them with success: but this blessing is not given out to the idle and negligent, but only to such as are up and doing. If we shall look no farther than an head purchase, which is the least and most easily gotten, yet it is certain that a clear understanding and right conception of the *form of sound words*, and skeam of saving Truths, which is to be gathered up out of the Sacred writings of the Book of God, is not gotten without a great deal of sweat and travail; how much more then will it stand a man in to make an heart purchase of it? It costs a man a double Prenticeship, and many a weary day, and waking night to reach to be Master of those hand-maid Truths, which are the Servants of Religion, and are called *the liberal Sciences*: how long time then, and how much labour must it stand him in to get the mistress of these, I mean the saving Truths of Religion? and the difficulty of getting a right acquaintance with these, will appear

appear to be far more than what concerns the other, if we shall consider;

I. *That we are all of us by nature meer strangers to the Truth;* that is spoken of all natural men, *Rom. 3. 17. The way of peace have they not known.* As to other inferior Truths, though there are none that are born Artists in them, yet there are such common Principles, and natural powers in us, as are able to grasp them, and receive them in by teaching or instruction; there is an inbred or congenerate ability to receive these notions, and the reasons of them, provided we have one skilled to inform us, and hence they are gotten with the more ease, because there is in our Soul a receptivity of them, or a passive principle that can entertain them: But as to these Divine Truths, we are not only without them actually, or habitually, but are also incapable of them in our natural estate, *1 Cor. 2. 14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* For though there are some Relicks of the old Law or Covenant left upon the Consciences of the Children of men; yet for those Truths which are truly Evangelical and Saving, there is not to be found the least foot-
step

126 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

step of them in us by nature; yea, they do indeed transcendently surpass the comprehension of all our natural reasonings: so that there must be a change wrought in our very powers or faculties before we can be capable of them.

2. *That we are exceeding dull and hard of hearing and learning these things:* there may be not only a capacity in a man, but a great deal of promptness to imbibe other Doctrines; a commendable docility, apt to take in the notions of the precepts of them, and make them ours as fast as they are told us: but as for the things of God, and the everlasting concerns of our immortal Souls, the case is far otherwise with us there: the Ox and the Ass are in their kind more docile than we are, *Isai. 1. 3. The Ox knows his owner, and the Ass his Masters crib, but Israel doth not know.* When a great deal of time, and pains, and patience hath been bestowed upon us, and all condescension to treat us in our own language, and help us by little and little, yet it is but a poor pittance that we arrive unto: what a blockhead did our Saviour Christ find *Nicodemus* to be in those things, though he was a Master in *Israel*, and one who by his Office ought him-

to
e
so
ur
be
of
be
eat
o.
to
ms
old
e.
als,
he
ore
ws
ib
of
be
to
us
nce
did
in
in
int
self

self to have instructed others in the knowledge of them? *Joh. 3. beginning* : and how doth he up-braid Philip after he had been so many years in his School? *Joh. 14. 8, 9.* Have I been so long time with you: and hast thou not known me, Philip? and the Apostle his Hebrews, Chap. 5. 11, 12. Ye are dull of hearing : for when for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again what be the first Principles of the Oracles of God. Nay,

3. That we are naturally built upon contrary Principles, and hereupon are averse and opposite to the Truth; We have suckt in lies from the Cradle; and are greatly in love with them; it is one of the hardest things in the World, to get false Opinions, that have been suited to mens Fancies, and drunk down with abundance of delight, rooted out again, and rejected by the man; and yet this must needs be done in order to the bringing of them to, and building of them upon the Truth: If mans heart were no more but *Rasa Tabula*; a fair and clean piece of Parchment, that had nothing at all inscribed upon it; if it stood in an equipoise to entertain any thing that might be first offered to it, it were then no great or difficult matter to fill it

128 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not?*

it with the curious engravings of the Truth: but whereas it is a book blotted and blurred and all over deeply graven with Fleshly Sentiments, which must all be erased and taken away before any thing can be done to purpose of this nature, it speaks it a very great work, the very clearing and smoothing of the Table, by which it may be fitted and prepared to take the Impression of the Truth, requires abundance of pains, and yet this must of necessity be done in this work; 2 Cor. 10. 5. *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* Hence therefore if you will purchase the Truth, it is requisite:

1: To be constant in the use of the means that are appointed to this end. God hath written his mind unto us in the Holy Scriptures, but we must be sure to read it there, if ever we intend to come by the knowledge of it: he hath also set up his Holy Ordinances; and in them hath appointed his Ambassadors to present men with the mysterious Truths of the Gospel; but if we have a desire to get any good by such an advantage as this, we must come to them, yea, we must
wait

wait at the posts of his doors, such the blessing is pronounced upon, Prov. 8. 34. which *waiting* implies constancy. The Truth is too bulky a thing to be all set to view at once, or displayed in one Ordinance, it is therefore given *Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept, here a little, and there a little*: Some Truths at one time, some at another, and therefore if we would miss none, we must come continually: Truth is bound up in several bails (there are divers heads to which the points of Religion are reduced) and if we would have the advantage of seeing all, we must come when they are opened, Hos. 6. 3. *Tken shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord.*

2. We must add diligence and attention unto this constancy, if we will make any work of it. It is not enough to be frequent in our coming to the means, but we must take a great deal of pains with our selves when we do come, Isa. 55. 3. *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your Souls shall live:* and this is an hard work, which requires labour. It calls for a wakeful body: God doth not ordinarily in these days reveal his mind to his people in dreams, to be sure not in his house where they are called to hear him speaking

to them: It would be a ridiculous thing to find men sleeping in the market place and at market; and yet how many such sights doth this heavenly mart present us withal? as if men expected visions instead of instructions; and there must also be an attentive ear, and that accompanied with a mind intent upon the present business: he that brings his body to the House of God, and leaves his heart behind him, or sends it abroad from thence, to be wandering in the corners of the earth, and roving after vain objects, is like to make but a poor purchase of it, and might ever as well have tarried away, for any benefit that is like to accrue to him by coming: the purchase of the Truth requires the intense activity of the whole Soul about it, *Psal. 110 10.*
With my whole heart have I sought thee.

3. We must joyn earnest prayer to all the rest: & that not only that God would keep us from the danger of being mistaken, and embracing of a Lye for the Truth, (as was hinted under the former direction) but also that we may come to the knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus: *God is the father of Lights*, and from him is every good and perfect gift communicated unto the children of men; it is he alone, by the influences of his Spirit, that

that must open our blind eyes, and enlighten our darkness: all our own endeavours, in reading hearing, conferring, meditating, absolutely depend upon his blessing for good success, and except he come in with his illuminating grace we still remain under our natural blindness; this therefore is the earnest request that Paul puts up in prayer for his Ephesians upon their accounts, chap. 1. 16, &c. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c. may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the knowledge of him, &c.* and this is the direction given by James, chap. 1. 5. *If any among you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.*

4. *We must add meditation unto prayer:* It is not all our hearing will profit us, though we should attend constantly on Ordinances, in season and out of season, if we go away and think no more of the things that have been told us: the way to make the Truth ours, is by getting it fixt in our hearts, and that is not done without serious musing upon it: Truth that is heard at an Ordinance, and is not afterwards taken and digested by meditation, is like meat which is eaten, and presently vomited up again, which affords us no nourishment: like the seed which was sown by the high-way-side, that was suddenly

132 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

pickt up by the Fowls of Heaven, and lay not long enough to take any rooting. Meditation is that whereby we take possession of the Truth, and enrich our Understandings; it was by this that *David* got the start of his Teachers; Psal. 119. 99. *I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for my Testimonies are my Meditation.* Thinking hearers are like to be the most profitable Hearers of the Word of God.

5. We must not rest satisfied in measures obtained, but restlessly pursue after more: that which is a vice, and deserves a sharp reproof in the worlds trading, is a commendable vertue in this kind of Merchandize; viz. the more we have, the more to crave: and by the purchase of every parcel of Truth, to have our spiritual appetite whet up to a greater sharpness and eagerness to be adding to our purchase: it's a worthy frame of Spirit in him that hath Truth in quest, not to be contented with a little portion of it, but to be using all endeavours, to *lay field to field, till there be no room in the earth.* I mean, to be buying up of Truth as long as there is any to be sold, and studiously to engross it all; and not to think himself rich enough, as long as he knows but in part, though he may have

have gotten a great deal more than many of his fellow Christians: this is *Peters counsel*, 2 Pet. 3. 18. *grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*; and Paul professeth it to be his practice, Phil. 3. 12, 13, 14. *Not that I have already obtained, &c. leaving the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press to the mark.* It is a sordid spirit in spiritual things, to covet no more Truth than what will bearly serve our turn as we suppose; and if we think we have gotten some of the main and fundamental Truths, to neglect the rest; and if Gods Servants are desirous to proceed further, and lead us up to those things which are more deep and mysterious, we presently cry out, these things are beyond our reach, and say, give us milk, and let them that can bear it be fed with strong meat; and care not at all for being told any thing more than what we think we know already; as if heavens wealth were not as desirable as earths, or we might be burdened with too much store of this precious and heavenly treasure. But the Truth is, we are too generally a lazy generation, that are loth to be at the pains that the purchase of these Truths will cost us.

134 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

2. There is also something that you must part withal for the sake of the truth, if you resolve to have it: and it is that which every natural man placeth a very high esteem upon, and accounts to be of great worth, which therefore makes so many break off, and not drive a through bargain; but you can never be savingly possess of the Truth till you have forgone it: And here,

1. There are some things which you must actually part with upon this score: you must lay them down, and lose all claim and title to them, *viz.*

1. All your own carnal conceits, and fleshly wisdom: there is naturally in the children of men an high and over-weaning opinion which they have taken up of themselves, and their own understandings, then which there is not a greater opposite or enemy to saving wisdom, and the Truth will never find room to be entertained in such an heart, as long as that is there abiding: it sets it self directly against the Truth, and endeavours to perswade the man that he hath no need at all of it, but that he hath a sufficient light within, knowledge enough of

of his own to direct his steps, and lead him right: yea, and besides that, it raiseth in him prejudices against the Truth, and seeks how to render it suspected of falshood. He that will buy this wisdom that is from above, must first let go that which is from below, *which is earthly, sensual, devilish*; and must become a fool in his own sense and acknowledgment, 1 Cor. 3. 18. *Let him that thinks himself wise, become a fool, that he may be wise*; and truly this is an hard saying, and cannot readily be born by men of great natural Parts, and rich acquired endowments; it is a debasing thing, and that which Flesh and Blood cannot well resent, but looks upon with reluctancy, to come out of all, to come back after such a progress as they have made, and begin again at their A B C, in the Spirits School: and without question, this is not the least of the stumbling blocks that lie in such mens way, and makes it a sad truth, that not many wise men of this world are made *savingly wise unto God*.

2. You must renounce all your worldly lusts too, if you would be *savingly* possess of the Truth: Not but that it is to be confessed, that men may be Orthodox in Principles, and vicious in their life; a poysonous Toad may have a Jewel

136 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

Jewel in his head of great worth ; men may have great attainments in Theoretical Divinity, and Christ may advise his Hearers to *do as the Pharisees say*, though he together admonisht them to beware of following their deeds : but so to know God in his Son Jesus Christ as is *Life Eternal* ; which is indeed the only profitable purchasing of the Truth, is inconsistent with the harbouring and maintaining of fleshly lusts : the Truth can find no suitable lodgings in a soul that is wedded to his concupiscence ; nay such is the nature of Divine Truth, that where it comes into the soul indeed, it will certainly shine down the works of darkness, and the same word of Truth that doth effectually *turn men from darkness to light*, doth at the same time *turn them from Sin to God*, hence they are put together as inseparable fruits and effects of the Gospel, where it comes with a saving efficacy, Acts 26. 18. *To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God* ; and we find Paul arguing from their learning, of the Truth, to the mortifying of their lusts, Eph. 4. 21, 22. *If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the Old-man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful*

deceitful lusts. Besides, every Fleshly Lust is a Lye, and they are called lies, in the Scripture, Psal. 40. 4. *Nor such as turn aside to lies; i. e.* to sinful and deceitful lusts: and hence every such lust entertained in the heart, must needs keep out the contrary Truth from taking up a room in the soul; and he that will engage himself to defend and plead for any foolish and hurtful lust, of what kind soever, must in so doing set himself against the Truth, and whether such an one be in any likely way to buy it, let any man judge.

2. And there are other things which you must part with in affection for the Truths sake, and that is all whatsoever is precious and delightful to you in this world. Love to the Truth, or our *receiving of it in the love of it*, is our entring upon the possession of it, and the strongest evidence of an indisputable title unto it; but it is not every pretended love that is so, but it must be such as undervalues every other thing in comparison with the Truth. I know that God doth not always call men actually to part with and cast away all these things, Houses, Lands, Relations, and going away from the company and comfort of them, turn desolate *Hermits*, and dwell

133 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not:*

dwelt in solitary caves void of all humane converse, that they may enjoy the fellowship and friendship of the Truth, as if Truth dwelt only in a wildderness, & were no where to be met with but in caves and deserts; the good things of this life are Gods common favours, and he hath engaged them to such as fear him, so far as shall best serve to his own glory and their advantage, *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is*, and if God gives, his people ought with thankfulness to receive these favours; but still he requires absolutely of us, that we withdraw our affections from them to such a degree, as to be at all times in a chearful readiness, either to let them go one after the other by retail, or all at once by whole sale, for Truths sake, if there be occasion for it. Neither is this a lesson to be learned afterwards, or by those that have been a great while trained in Truths School, and have attained to be of the uppermost forms of her Scholars; that have made a great proficiency in the learning of it: but it is one of the entrance articles, it is a law of the School, and to be complied with upon admission; it is one of the conditions of Discipleship, Mat. 16. 24. *If any man will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me*, Luke 14. 26. *If any man come unto me,*
and

and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children; and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my Disciple: i. e. if he doth not set a less and lower esteem upon them, than upon the Truth and ways of Christ; and there is great reason for it; because he that buys the Truth, buys together with it the hatred of Men and Devils; and although God is often pleased to curb in their rage, and to tie up their mouths, so as that they cannot devour his people, yet this is ever to be expected, that Truth and Persecution will go together; and God many times doth (for holy ends) permit Persecution to extend it self to the depriving his people of all these things: and therefore he who doth not buy the Truth with such a supposal, and accordingly is so provided for it, as not to be prejudiced at all these changes, had better to sit still and let it alone:

This may suffice for the Third Direction.

4. Finally, If you will buy the Truth, buy it Now, use no delays in the business. There is now a fair advantage in your hands, Truths Shop stands open all the day long; there is many a spiritual Market set open to you on the Lords dayes, and on other frequent

140 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

quent occasions ; it is now a day of Grace with you, and (I pray) let it not slip : God himself offers to you the Truth, and intreats of you to buy it, and bids you, that if you have any purpose so to do, you will do it quickly, to day, while the Market lasts, and a price is in your hands ; and to urge this advice, give me leave to offer these things to your serious thoughts.

1. *Truths Market will certainly be over with every one of us in a little while, and then there will be no buying of it, though you should never so much desire it.* There was a time when the Prophet made that sad complaint concerning *Jerusalem*; Lam. 2. 9. *The Law is no more, her Prophets also find no vision from the Lord.* And whither we may live to see the doors of Gods house shut up, and publick Worship interdicted, is with Him alone to determine, who hath put the times and seasons into his own power ; But this is certain, that there is none of us all shall long enjoy a season to be purchasing of this heavenly wisdom in ; there will a time come, and it may be before we think of it, when our feet shall carry us no more to those places, where God hath been wont to come and reveal himself to the Children of men : unless therefore
you

Buy the Truth, and sell it not. 141

you are resolved to be for ever without it, buy the Truth NOW. It is a solemn counsel and caution which the wise man gives upon this account, Eccles. 9. 10. *Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave whether thou goest.* There are no Lectures of wisdom preached to the Congregation of the dead: and it is a solemn consideration to be thought upon, to consider, how seldom (if ever) there is an assembly met in this place on such an occasion, but there is some one or other of the company, that must come hither no more, but before another opportunity comes about, are lockt up in silence, and laid out of the reach of soul saving means: and which of us all that stand before God at this time, can tell but that we are hearing of the last Sermon, and shall never again have one more offer of the Truth made unto us? and why will you dy fools? will not Repentance then come to late?

2. *Your trifling will give God the provocation to pack up his precious wares and be gone.* Should a Merchant come among a people, and bring along with him the richest and most necessary Goods (such as men cannot do without)

142 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

without, and such as no other hath to sell) and offer them to people at the easiest rates, so that every one, even the poorest, might be able to buy them, if he had a mind to it; and when he hath opened, and set them to view, yea, and given sufficient notice to all, bidding them to come; and now, though a great many pretended Customers do come to see them, and his Shop be full of such, yet here is one that stares up and down, and never so much as minds the Commodities; there are others smiling, and saying, this man hath gotten an excellent faculty in commending his own Wares; here are some huffing, and protesting that they can see no such excellency in them, as they were commended for, they are dull unsightly things which have no gloss upon them: others cry out, we lookt for something new, but these are nothing but a company of old worn things, and what service can we expect from them? and here and there is one that speaks in their commendation, professeth the things are good, and begins to cheapen them, but as soon as ever he hears the price, cries out it is an hard penniworth, and if he is resolved to hold them up so high, he must even keep them for him; and it may be once in a great while there is one or two that doth come and buy; would

would not this man thus conclude within himself, and say, I see this is no place for me to vend my Merchandize in, this people have no occasion for it, I do but lose my labour and time in waiting for custom here; and will therefore pack it up, and carry it away to some other place where I may find better acceptance, and more encouragement; and truly I am very much out in my observations if this be not too much *New England's* case, in respect of the Truth: There is no need for me to tell you what and how many awful Tokens there are amongst us of God's being threatning to depart from us: it is a Subject that hath been much and often discoursed of, and great enquiry there hath been made after the provocation; and there is no doubt to be made of it, but that the *Pride, Vanity, Profaneness, Earthly-mindedness, Contention, &c.* of a professing People, have been highly provoking to the great God, whose Name hath been dishonoured, and wayes evil spoken of by reason of these things: but yet I am fully perswaded, that the root of all these, and that which God hath principally to article against us for, is this, That the Truth hath been a drug among us; the Gospel of Truth hath been wofully contemned. There hath been a long day where.

144 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

wherein we have had the free enjoyment of it, but hath not the Lord been all day long stretching out his hand to a gain-saying and disobedient people ! there have been indeed a great many boglers, but a few buyers ; many that have made fair offers as if they would have done something this way, but when it came to the upshot, they have fallen off again ; and may not God say unto us as Christ did in a like case to those Jews., Mat. 21. 43. *The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof.* And let me say, God seems to be now in greater haste than ordinary, let us be the more wary of putting him upon it.

3. Consider that buying is the only way for you to continue and keep this Market up : if the Merchant comes to a place, and there finds full and free vent for his Wares, he hath his desire, and this will oblige him to fix his abode there, and not to think of a removal ; and if there were more of love to the Truth among us, if there were more buying the Truth, and living by the Truth practised, God would never take it away from us : I am fully perswaded, that if the Gospel
and

145 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

and Ordinances of Jesus Christ were better prized, and the great Truths of the Word of God more carefully improved; if we were more solicitous to acquaint our selves with God, and diligent to make use of that acquaintance to the promoting of holiness in our hearts and lives; that whatever other trials God might exercise the graces of his people withal, we should never want the clear and precious dispensations of the Gospel among us: Our Saviour Christ intimated thus much to them, when he gave that as the reason why these things were hidden from them, Luke 19. 42. *If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! yea Paul and Barnabas* render that as the very reason why they went from the Jews, and turned to the Gentiles, Acts 13. 16. *Seeing ye put the Word of God from you, and judge your selves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles:* yea, when God always in the Scripture, gives this to be the great provocation for which he cometh out at any time against a Professing people in the way of his Judgments, especially to turn them out of his house, it plainly speaks thus much, *viz.* that if it had not been for this, that His Word

L

was

'146 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

was slighted, and his Truth trampled upon; they had never felt the fierceness of his indignation in such a way, as to be stript of the light, and left without *people and vision*.

4. Consider also that if you now buy, you shall then have something to live on, when others must starve: how soon a Famine of the Truth (that worst of famines) may come upon us, we do not know; there was a time when God threatned it to the people of *Israel*, Amos 8. 11. *behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the Land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:* and there is great reason why a people should be afraid of it, there where fulness hath begotten loathing, and plenty hath produced carelessness: where men have put greatest slights upon these best things, and grown weary of them: and if such a time doth come, it will be known who husbanded the harvest, who took the opportunity of the market time to buy provision, and furnish themselves against a time of need: then Truth (how low soever it is now esteemed) will be of worth, *the vision will be precious*, and men shall seek for it in vain, as the Prophet follows it in
verse

verse 12. *They shall wander from Sea to Sea, and from the North even to the East, and they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it.* When the Merchant hath trust up his fardels and is gone, it is then no time for any to buy of him, they that did it not in the proper season, must now suffer the want whatever it be. But when it is so, that all trading is ceased, and every market is shut up, then that happy soul that had the wisdom and grace to get Truth his own, in the season wherein it was to be had, and hath laid it up in his heart as a precious treasure, shall have the comfort of it indeed. The Truth that is only deposited in the publick store of Ordinances, and set to sale in them, may be taken away from us, the market may be stopt, the doors of Gods House may be shut up: but he that hath gotten the Truth lockt up in the secret cabinet of his soul, can never be robbed of it, nor yet be hindred from using and improving it for his spiritual refreshing and comfort, in the darkest hours of oppression; take therefore your opportunity, and whilst you may, secure this, and you shall be happy. This may suffice for the first branch of the Exhortation; a few words to the second shall shut up this discourse.

148 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

2. Let it be a word of advice to such as have already bought the Truth; be you advised to hold it fast, and never sell it again. It may possibly be accounted superfluous to say much here by way of advice; in as much as those that have only entertained a notion of Truth in their heads, have not driven a thorough bargain for it; and therefore are not concerned in this, but are to be sent to the former exhortation: and they that have indeed received it into their hearts, will, can never relinquish it any more, it being a saving work wrought in them, by the Spirit of God, *whose gifts are unrepentable*: But let me answer to this, that God works by means, and that not only in bringing men over to the Truth, but also in his keeping of them in it: no man is so resolved, but if he should be left to himself, he might easily be beaten out of those resolutions: strong corruptions within, abetted by an hour of sore Temptation from abroad, oftentimes shakes the weak faith of a Christian, and makes him to stagger in his Profession: *feeble knees had need to be strengthened, and hands that hang down to be lifted up*: and God is wont to do this for his people in the use of means; and there-

therefore the Gospel Ordinances are as well appointed for the perfecting of the Saints, as for the converting of Sinners; how much therefore of the Scripture shall we find to be spent in cautions, counsels and encouragements upon this account.

The summe then of the Exhortation is : *That you labour to be confirmed in an unchangeable resolution, to maintain the Truth both in heart and profession, in despite of all Temptations that may endeavour to draw you to part with it ;* what are the Temptations, which any of us may be assaulted by, and to what an height they may arise, is at the dispose of him who sits upon the circuit of the Heaven ; there have been fore ones that many of Gods faithful ones have encountred withal ; and we dwell in a world where they may be expected, nor have we any charter that gives us special immunity from meeting the like.

To speak more particularly, there are two ways, or two sorts of Temptations by which they who have bought the Truth may be endangered, viz. *either of being colloagned or else affrighted out of it :* In the former of these we are invited by the worlds honours, profits,

and pleasures, which look upon us with a smiling countenance, and bespeak us in an insinuating dialect: in the latter we are scared with the Cross and Persecution, looking grim and ghastly upon us, and speaking in Thunder and Lightning to us: The one makes an offer to us of something in exchange for it, and would fain persuade us to believe that we shall be no losers by the bargain: the other tries all it can to discourage us from the keeping of it, and urge us to believe it our wisdom to part with it as soon as we can, and how great a folly it will be in us to resolve to maintain it, with these innumerable hazards and encumbrances that are the certain appendices of it: Now one of these two Temptations do (for the most part) make discovery of those that have made but a slightly purchase, and bought the Truth no farther than in an outward profession; and they are plainly and fully characterized to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, the one in the stony, the other in the thorny ground, mentioned in that Parable, Math. 13. The former of these did (at the first preaching of it) receive the Truth with a great deal of seeming joy, but it was but an outside and flashy joy, which wanted good rooting, and it therein

manifested it self to be so, because when the Sun of Persecution rose high, and beat hot upon it, *all withered*, which was *because it had no depth*, *verse 20, 21*. The latter took some deeper impression, but together with it there grew up *thorny cares*, and *deceitful pleasures*, and they *choaked all*, *verse 22, 23*. and it is very certain, that if men can either be perswaded that they may put off the Truth to some considerable advantage, or that they cannot maintain it without some notable loss, they are prepared to make this unhappy bargain, *to sell the Truth*; I shall therefore essay to speak something which may afford suitable help for your establishment against the prevalency of both these Temptations, and that only in some few words of advice.

I. *Endeavour to make sure and clear your title to the Truth.* Man is a dependant creature, and every one would willingly have something which they may live upon, and whereunto they may safely trust: and that which is the great engagement upon men to stand by a thing, hold it fast, and utterly refuse to let it go, is (together with a perswasion in their minds of the excellency and worth

worth of it.) an apprehension of an interest which they have in it; and ever the more confident a man is in this particular, the more resolute may we expect that he will be: A man may enjoy a goodly inheritance, be in the possession of it, and be exceedingly unwilling to be put out of it; and yet notwithstanding, if he suspect the validity of his deeds and evidences, and be afraid that he shall never be able to make good his title to it in Law; and may so be put to a great deal of trouble and expense, and lose all at last, this very suspicion will make him very cold in the defending of it, and put him upon the temptation to forgo it at some considerable disadvantage: many are in their judgments persuaded of the inestimable value of this Jewel, *Truth*; and how happy a portion they have gotten who are the true owners of it, but they are withal afraid lest they have but deceived themselves, and have not driven a through and full Bargain for it, they are doubtful whether the evidence they can produce for their title to it, will stand good; and in the mean while, to think of suffering the loss of all the outward advantages of the delights of this world, and to undergo the troubles and hazards of persecution in standing by

by it (and how far they may extend they know not) and after all this to be dispossessed of the Truth too, this looks sadly upon them, and these fears do many times make them to faint, and draw back, at least put them to such stands that they know not what to do: and without question, it must needs be a fearful thing to lose credit, liberty, estate, ease and life too for the Truth, and lose the Truth at last, and the Soul by that loss, which is a possible case: That you may avoid being reduced to such a *Dilemma*, and prevent this distress, your work is not to rest till you see the Deeds signed, sealed and delivered; to follow that advice, *1 Pet. 1. 10. Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure*, and if once you can say securely with *Paul*, *You know whom you have trusted*, you may well build that upon it which he doth, *For this cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I am not ashamed*, *2 Tim. 1. 12.* if you are but well satisfied in that, that you do not labour at uncertainties, that the Truth is really yours, and shall without fail recompence you all your cost, with infinite interest; let the expense in maintaining of it be never so much, this will certainly put life into your resolutions, and make you stand your ground without

154 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

without flinching, entertaining with an holy scorn all the essayes or offers which can be made, either to cog or wrest the Truth out of your hands :

2. *Beware of being ashamed to own, or perswaded through fear to suppress the profession of the Truth.* It is none of the least of the devices of Satan : and lessons which he hath thoroughly instructed his instruments in, to cast an odium and obloquy upon the Truth, and the serious professors of it ; and it is grounded upon this presumption, that if they can once obtain to make it infamous, they shall then with little difficulty draw men away from it, meerly to avoid that scandal which they shall otherwise expose themselves unto, by the open profession of it. It is not seldom that the Truth comes to be quite out of credit among the generality of men, when the Prophets complaint is verified, *Isai. 59. 14, 15. Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter, yea Truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey : when matters so stand in the World, that nothing shall expose a man to so much opprobry and contempt as the lively profession of it ; when a man's name and quiet shall be more secure,*
and

and out of danger, in the commission of all manner of debaucheries, than in the sober asserting of such a Profession; and such men as do so profess, shall be so strangely characterized, and represented to the World as more dangerous to the civil interests, and more pernicious enemies to the peace and safety of man-kind than the most profane and profligate men: when openly to own and assert the Truth, shall expose a man to be the ridicule of the world and scorn of the generation: such things as these there have been many of the people of God that have been experienced witnesses of: and now when it is so, the greatest number of men that have sometimes made a profession, may be ready to withdraw, and think it to be a great deal more safe for them to suppress it, and keep in the Truth: they may be loth to lay themselves open, and to have their persons vilified, and names bespattered with all reproachful reflections: and when they have given way to such a shame as this is, it will readily put them upon dissembling, and that they may shore up their reputation, they make bold to *imprison the Truth*, to shrink in from it, and leave it alone to plead for it self; quieting their own consciences, (which would

156 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

would else give them woful girds, and lead them a disquiet life) with supposing that if they do not openly abjure it, but embrace and lodg it in their hearts, and keep them true to it, such a course as this, is safest for the times, and sufficient for their own security: But let us know that all Truth is practical, and God requires also of us that we let the world know that it is our hope; and therefore the Apostle Peter gives that advice to Gods people in respect of such times as are under consideration, 1 Pet. 3. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer unto every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and with fear.* He that is ashamed to make a profession of the Truth, is ashamed of the Truth, and he that is ashamed of the Truth, is ashamed of Jesus Christ, who is Truth it self; and if he be thus ashamed of Christ, Christ will be as much ashamed of him in that day wherein it would be his only interest and happiness to be acknowledged by him, Mark. 8. 38. & we may take it for granted, that that man who is ashamed of the Truth, hath at least made half a sale of it.

3. Take heed that you do not part with
any

any one Truth. It is a vain and foolish thing for us to let one go, and yet think to keep the rest: if once you begin to be barreling here, it will be an easy matter to buy you out of the whole stock; for let men palliate and excuse things as cunningly as they will, yet this will prove certain, that by the same reason that a man may be prevailed upon to give his consent in the alienation of any one, let it be supposed to be the least Truth in the whole system of Theology, that man will in time be wrought upon to sell all others which he hath pretended to: There are some men who think that if they do but keep to the fundamentals, and stand by them, there is less danger though they part with such as are Circumstantials: They applaud their own prudence, that they have taken up a resolution to keep Truth enough to be saved by at last, and that they will (if need be) stand in the defence of, and for all the rest, if they renounce and disclaim them, for their present profit or security, to keep themselves in an whole skin, and make the less disturbance in the places they live in, there will be no such great harm in it: and when once the Devil hath gotten this hold of men, he thinks that he hath gotten

158 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not:*

gotten enough to undo, bankrupt and ruine them: Nay this is his own trick, or way which he himself hath contrived to take with men as the most likely to whedle them out of their Religion. The Devil knows well enough, that such men as have made a great Profession are not to be perswaded to step into the depth of Apostasie at one stride, that they will not sell Truth and Religion all in one sale: and hence he accomodates the Temptations that he useth with them to the best advantage, to which purpose he in the first place begins to cheapen some Truth which he supposeth they set the least by, and do not account to be so momentous as they do some others; and if either by Flatteries or Menaces, by fair promises, or furious threatnings, he can but bring them up to a consent to deny such a Truth, and profess against it, his most difficult talk is over, and all the rest is gotten with more ease.

The Devil hath learnt more wit at length than to ask men to throw themselves down from the pinnacle of the Temple prostrate at his feet, at a leap, the very sight and apprehension whereof would appear amazing and frightful; but he hath gotten fair and easie winding

winding stairs, where a man shall neither see back from whence he came, nor forward whither he is going; and hath also many a Landing where he may stand still and breath; and thus by slow paces and easie degrees he draws men insensibly away from the Truth: And how many Professors have so been brought to make shipwreck of their Faith. Hence Hells Factors and Cheats would fain perswade men to hearken to them, and say, alas! these are but poor niceties, disputable points, matters of no great moment whether you believe them or no: they are things too small and inconsequential to disquiet the Church with, or deprive themselves of favour and preferment for: But it is very notorious, that men who have suffered their Consciences so to be bribed, and have against the light of them, hearkened to the alluring invitations that have been thus proposed to them, have not made any long time of it, ere they have been deserters, and not staying there, grown to be zealous Persecutors of Religion; except God hath in mercy to their souls awakened and reclaimed them. Know this then that as small a matter as it may look to be, and how high soever the cunning of Seducers may

160 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

may perswade you to make of it, yet he that abandons one known Truth, though it look to be of the least size, is a step to the most fearful Apostasie, and if you are once stept into the way of it, you are under the greatest probability of being lost for ever :

Now for your help to the practise of these duties, take these two words of Advice.

1. *Be perswaded to believe what losers you shall be, if you shall exchange the Truth for any worldly things whatsoever.* Men that do buy and sell do aim at some advantage by it, or else they had as good sit still and spare themselves the trouble ; but if you should let go any one Truth for all that is to be gotten in the World, you would not only be no gainers, but inexpressible losers : thus to do would be nothing less or better than to sell a substance for a shadow, an enduring substance for a flying shadow : compare the highest offers that the world is able to make, with the Truth, and see how incomparably they fell short of having the worth and good in them which that hath : is it wealth, it tempts you with ? (and so poor Demas
was

Buy the Truth, and Sell it not. 167

was fooled out of his Religion) why they are but the Treasures of Egypt, and the reproach of Christ is greater Riches than all these, Heb. 11. 26. Gold it self is but perishing dust, Truth is an everlasting Treasure. Are they earthly pleasures and carnal delights? Afflicted Truth is upon a mature deliberation to be chosen before them: as being more eligible, Heb. 11. 25. thus to part with it, is to give undefiled Delights and everlasting, for the pleasures of sin which are but for a season. Is it favour and respect in the World? it is to exchange the love of the eternal God, for the good will of dying men, and to put yourselves under their character, Job. 12. 42. they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. In a word, put them all together, and make the most of them you possibly can, and they will amount but to a fading felicity, upon which you shall never settle; but keep the Truth, and it shall crown you with immortality and eternal life.

2. Beware of being frightened by the apprehension of the hazards which the preserving of the Truth may expose you unto: They are unto Flesh and Blood terrible and scaring things, but to a rightly informed and spiritual judgment

162 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

ment they are but bug-bears and scare crows: they cannot of themselves make a divorce between you and the Truth; and as long as they cannot do that, they can do you no real harm; the Apostle *Peter* seeks to quiet the Spirits of those he writes unto with such a consideration, *1 Pet. 3. 12. and who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* they might readily reply, Devils will, and the enemies of God and goodness will the rather do it for this; *Peter* knew all this, but he would have you to understand that it is out of their reach, that though they would, yet they cannot do it: do you but keep the Truth and that will keep you; it will be a Garison that can never be subdued. There is indeed an evil in these things, and therefore it is lawful to desire (if it may stand with divine counsel) that they may be kept from us; but whither they shall or no is with him who knows what is best; and this is sufficient for us, that the God of Truth hath engaged his Word and Faithfulness to turn it unto good in the operation; and you may safely trust him with it, for he is able to do it. Be not slavishly afraid; what saith the wise man, *Prov. 29. 25. The fear of man bringeth a snare, but whosoever trusteth in the Lord*

Lord shall be safe. They are poor revengees that the World can wreak upon us, and therefore, in the judgment of our Saviour Christ, not worthy of a Christian fear, *Mat. 10.28. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.* When the three Children were threatned with a fiery Furnace, they thought it not a thing worth the answering, *Dan. 3. 16. O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter:* the proud King thought to have scared them into a ly, but he was greatly mistaken; the Fear of God, and love of the Truth, had put them beyond such puny fears.

Now for your furtherance, let me add a few special Rules, which may help to strengthen you to this great duty, *viz.*

1. See that you do not place your hopes for happiness in this life or the things of it. That is it which makes these Doctrines which represent the Worlds grandure as contemptible, and the afflictions of it as scarce regardable, to seem *Paradoxes* to us, because we confine mans happiness too much to this present time. The Apostle saw how incompatible these two were, to be a Christian, and to ty up

164 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

ones hopes to this life, when he laid down that conclusion, 1 Cor. 15. 19. *If our hope in Christ were for this life only, we were of all men most miserable.* If we think it an undoing thing either to be without the delights, or to suffer the afflictions of this World, it will be no hard matter to make us put off the Truth as a cumbersome Commodity; yea, as that the keeping whereof will endanger our ruine: And that is the reason why carnal men account resolved Christians to be the veriest Fools in nature.

He must have his hopes fixed no where short of Heaven, who will stand by his Purchase of the Truth against all the assaults that he may undergo for it upon Earth.

That which made the primitive Christians so steady in this practise was, they took their eyes off from *Temporal*, and fixt them upon *Eternal things*, 2 Cor. 4. ult. yea, this was it that made the antient Patriarchs to forsake all for the Truth, because they confessed themselves *Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth*, and looked for a *City which hath Foundations*,

2. Hence

2. Hence you must be much in the mortifying of fleshly lusts. So much of carnal concupiscence as there is in us, so much there is of enmity against the Truth; and hence, so much as there is of the activity and prevalency of it, so much danger there will be of our yielding to the Temptation offered us: these will be ever crying out, with *Jobs Wife*, *how long wilt thou retain thine integrity? Curse God and Dye*; and with *Peter*, *Master save thy self*, these are they which will be ever fighting against the Soul, and must therefore be obtained from, 1 Pet. 2. 11. these be they which know no other happiness, but what is enjoyed in the pomps and pleasures of the world, and apprehend no other misery but what is suffered by the loss of these things, and being subjected to the trials of this life: if these therefore may be heard, and their pleadings be any whit regarded, we shall be but *wavering Christians*, and *tossed to and fro with every wind* of Temptations. If therefore you would not sell the Truth, be sure to subdue your lusts, bring them to the Cross of Christ, learn to deny your selves, labour to be crucified to the world, and get that crucified to you: beware then of feeding and pampering of them, of gratifying their desires,

166 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

fires, and giving them their scope, by pleading for, and defending of them in any of their exorbitancies: if you give them the reins now, they will be masters when an hour of trial shall come, and will carry you away to seek shelter under a lye, rather than expose your selves by standing your ground in maintainance of the Truth.

3. Hence also arm your selves to endure hardness; he that will resolve not to sell the Truth, and never go from that resolution, must expect (and accordingly prepare) to meet with a thousand hazards, and combat ten thousand difficulties in the preservation of it; *Paul knows not in particular, what things shall befall him for the Truths sake*, but this he is well aware of *that bonds and afflictions do abide him*. After that we have bought the Truth, and been at never so much cost for it, if Satan and wicked men may have their wills, they will never suffer us to enjoy the quiet possession of it, but do all they can to cast us out of this inheritance: and though it be not always actually so, yet there is ever great reason to expect that it may so be, that if we will not sell the Truth, we may dye for it: if *Naboth* will not part with his inheritance

heritance, he must part with his life, and this is an hard chapter to Flesh and Blood; nature relucts here, *Skin for Skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life.* They are not the tender and delicate, but the hardy and exercised Christians who are like to endure such a shock as this is, hence therefore the Apostle gives *Timothy* that advice, *2 Tim. 2. 3. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good Souldier of Jesus Christ*; he is a man indeed, who when he sees all creature comforts going, his house rifled, his goods confiscated, his family dispersed, his person siezed and laid up in Irons, and his very life exposed to cruelty and rage, and all this for Truths sake; thou can with a chearful countenance, and undaunted soul, look upon all this, and say with *Paul*, *none of these things move me, nor do I count my life to be dear, so I may but save the Truth, and we may live and die together*: he who doth but read what this stood these Worthies of old in, recorded in *Heb. 11. 38. &c.* will say those were not tender chits, but hardy Souldiers of *Jesus Christ*.

4. Beware of being too much led by examples, he that will stand by the Truth must resolve, not only conditionally, but absolutely;

168 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

lately; not only to stand as long as this or that man whom he placeth great credit and confidence in, but he must resolve as *Peter*, *though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*. If we will truly obey this command of God, it must be no prejudice to us, if we see a thousand fall at our right hand, and ten thousand at our left, though great Stars should come tumbling down out of the Firmament, and those seemingly of the first magnitude: though this should be brought as an argument against us, and thrown in our dish to upbraid us, yet we must not regard it, so as to be shaken in Spirit, but when many go away and walk no more with Christ, we must make the same answer that his Disciples did to him, when he askt them if they would go also, *John 6. 68. Whither shall we go? thou onely hast the words of Eternal Life*; and it is no unusual thing for an hour of Temptation to present us with the ruines of many an Eminent Professor, who hath forsaken the truth, and embraced the world, these must be our monitors, and not our Presidents.

5. Beware of Carnal Confidence, and learn to be humble. It is *Pauls* advice, *1 Cor. 10. 12. Let him that thinketh he stands, take*

Take heed lest he fall; there is many a man that makes a great bluster with a Profession; and he sell the Truth? No not he: here is this or that man they are afraid of, (and it is to be hoped their Charity will engage them to pray for them) but for themselves they are fixt, and say as Peter, *I be offended? no, tho all be offended, I will not; I deny thee? no, though I should dye with thee, I'll not deny thee*; there are a great many such boasters, whom (it is to be feared) if tryals come indeed upon them, God will put to shame: It is the humble self-suspecting soul, that is like to keep his ground, and maintain the Truth, as his inheritance, with unshaken resolutions.

6. Hence be much in the exercise of faith and prayer; believe in Christ, and rely on his promise; Truths great rewards are in reversion, and received by faith; and our strength is not in our own hands but in Gods, and therefore to be sought for by earnest supplications: If God do not help us we shall fail, he only can carry us through; all that encouragement, support, comfort, and inward re-


¶ 70 *Buy the Truth, and Sell it not.*

relief which is requisite to the making us stable and unmoveable, must come *down* from him who is the Father of lights; his Promise must be our strength, and his Spirit our assistor: and therefore let us study to be strong in the faith, and spirited unto Prayer, so shall we never be deserted of that help by which we stand.

7. Taste the sweet and contemplate the excellency of the reward which is laid up in the Truth: What *David* said of God, I may say of Truth, *Plal. 34. 8. Oh taste and see that Truth is good: were our life more spiritual, our purposes would be more stable: one through favoury relish of the Truth, is enough to make us to resolve to lose all rather than that: and when we have gotten a gust of its incomparable preciousness, now let us contemplate these vast treasures, that immense and eternal fountain of this goodness, which is contained in it, where there is enough to satisfy and fill the souls of the people of God for ever; that*
King-

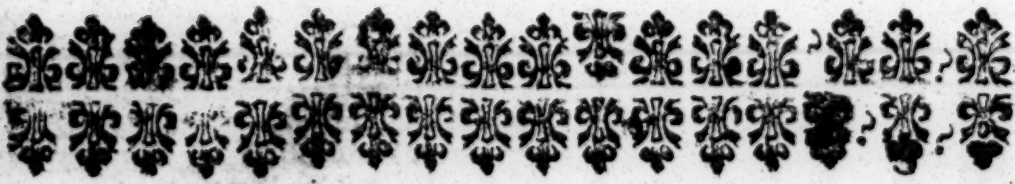
Kingdom and Crown, those glories and pleasures which the purchase of the truth gives us an indisputable title to ; and let us oppose these things to the Temptations which assault us ; and if we have *any* thing of Truth really implanted in us , this will be enough to conquer them all ; and here is a work cut out for every *one* ; you that have not already purchased, your business is *to buy the Truth*, and you that have so done, your care is *not to sell it again* ; and in so doing, the Truth *shall* preserve us here from the harm of every evil ; it shall conduct us so as that we shall not be in danger of losing *our way* ; and it shall finally bring us to, and possess us of a Kingdom of Everlasting Glory.

F I N I S.



This Book is to be Sold by *Joseph Brun-*
ning, at his Shop near the *Exchange*.
1686.

THe greatest Sinners exhorted and
Encouraged to come to Christ,
and that **NOW** without Delaying:
Also the exceeding danger of men's
deferring their Repentance. Together
with a Discourse about the Day of
Judgment. And on several other Subjects.
By *Increase Mather*, Teacher of a
Church at *Boston* in *N. E.*



THere is a small Book Intituled *A Wedding Ring fit for the Finger*, which will soon be out of the Press: And will be Sold by *Samuel Phillips* at the West End of the *Town-house* in *Boston*.

Readers, You are requested candidly to bear with some few literal mistakes, and mispointings, which are hardly avoidable; and to correct these more observable *Errata's*.

Page . 76. Line 17. read *may make*. p. 84. l. 23. r. *maybe*
p. 86. l. 5. r. *to be the*. p. 130. l. 13. for *ever* r. *even*. p.
146. l. 4. for *People* r. *Prophet*. p. 159. l. ult. for *high* r.
light.

from my sary hide this
thing lest i with sorrow to
the grave i bring come son back
go a long with me ~~some~~
servants that she uses
perhaps where must we go
Teir father in such haste since
large the twi light of the
morning past when you a son
may but you your to say you used
to say you meant to say I would
the such greeting say this is an
un ~~expected~~ one my son we
must go and I know it is must
be done god be the command we
must obey bid won't or feel

before him and say
we pray father. I want to
my mother tell me how
father if she no need of
our to purchase here our
absence will occasion grief
and fear like that we are
for that my son but go with
me and you your worthy son
I shall see the wood the fire
the knife all preserved
but yet a last the lamb I
can not see pray father
tell me how we can do with
with out a lamb to offer.
I desire take that no
care for that my son

Book this 3 day of Dec
ember in the year of our
Lord 1695 Bought of
James Gray Read over this
good Book I pray

Cornelius Baker
his book this 3 day
of Decem ber in
the year of our
Lord 1695 bought
of James Gray read
over this good book
I pray

